

The Gift of my Friend W. A. Hill
T R A C T S

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**S E R M O N S,
D I S C O U R S E S,
A N D
L E T T E R S.**

By the REVEREND
WILLIAM WEBSTER, D. D.
VICAR of *Ware and Thundridge* in
Hertfordshire.



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TRACTS

of

SERMONS

DISCOURSES

AND

LETTERS



BY THE REVEND

WILLIAM WEBSTER, D.D.

Dean of Worcester and Bishop of Exeter

London

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ADVERTISEMENT.

T*THIS Volume is printed for the*
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in Fetter-Lane.

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be equally vain and injurious were I to make
it a question, whether your extensive Influence
in high Life might not be greatly serviceable
to One in my low Station, whether it

To the HONOURABLE

CHARLES LEIGH, Esq;

That which induc'd me to beg your Patron-
age, As a Man I do not pretend to such

Leighton Beau-Desert in Bedfordshire.

quite above the Thoughts of all worldly Advan-
tages, nor of so object a Cast of Mind as to
be below the Influence of a laudable Ambi-
tion; yet, as I am a Christian, Reason respects
ing the Interest of Religion, and Virtue and the

MY Desire of addressing This Col-
lection to You, Sir, arose from a
View quite different from Those
which usually determine Writers
in the Choice of their Patrons. The com-
mon Reasons, assigned for Dedications, have
respected either the Author, or the Person to
whom he dedicated his Work; but my Mo-
tive respects neither You nor my Self.—I
Should betray an unpardonable share of Va-
nity, did I imagine my self capable of doing
you any kind of Credit, or Service, by any
Thing that I can say of you; and it would

be equally vain and injurious were I to make it a question, whether your extensive Influence in high Life might not be greatly serviceable to One in my low Situation; or whether it be not a very great Honour to me to have the Opportunity of declaring to the World, that you have condescended to Take me into the Number of your Friends. But, These Motives, reasonable and engaging as They are in Themselves, are of a Nature much inferior to That which induc'd me to beg your Patronage. As a Man, I do not pretend to such a mortified and abstracted Disposition as to be quite above the Thoughts of all worldly Advantages, nor of so abject a Cast of Mind as to be below the Influence of a laudable Ambition; yet, as I am a Christian, Reasons respecting the Interest of Religion, and Virtue and the General Good of Mankind, carry so superior a Force, that, while the Mind attends to Them it is in a manner regardless of all Others. Those Virtues and Good Qualities upon which depend the Preservation of Order in civil Life and the Happiness of human Nature, are so much out of Fashion in the polite World that They look like an Undress, or an awkward Habit, in Good Company; and the Vulgar, always fond of Imitation, are forward to join with their Betters in affecting to laugh at the Singularity of such an Appearance; and, therefore, I thought, it might be of great Use to let all my Readers know that a Gentleman

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tleman of Quality, and of a very ample Fortune, is not ashamed to be Religious and Virtuous; and that whenever such a One dares to be Thus singularly Excellent, he may, in spite of Themselves, command Admiration and an affectionate Respect, even from the Impious and Immoral. Piety, an awful Reverence for the Deity, testified by a constant Attendance upon his publick Worship and a religious Observation of the Sabbath, is not only disregarded, but held in Contempt, by Persons of Distinction; which makes it the more meritorious in Those who have so much Firmness of Mind as to preserve their Principles, and so much Resolution as to set a better Example. While others of your Rank think it genteel to take unnecessary Journeys on the Sunday, or spend it in private and perhaps unlawful Amusements, it is your Pleasure and your Glory to abstain from such Insults upon all Authority, to go regularly to the House of God with your Family, to acknowledge his Providence to whose Bounty you owe your great Abundance of Blessings, to make it a Day of Devotion to your Benefactor, as well as a Day of Rest to your Servants and Cattle; at once giving a Specimen both of your Gratitude, and Compassion. While others are contributing so largely to maintain Pleasures that are necessarily productive of a general Dissipation of Thought and a Dissolution of Manners, (which must

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destroy any People) you have been at the Expence of purchasing an elegant Building, at one Place of your Residence, for publick Worship, and give an annual Salary for divine Service to be perform'd in it every Sunday; while at another you are at the Expence of keeping up daily Prayers at the Parish-Church. This, Sir, is not only serving God, but your Country. By promoting Piety and Virtue you shew the Patriot, as well as the Christian. --- At a Time of General Distress, when the Nation is involv'd in a most expensive War, the Legislature at a loss how to raise the necessary Supplies, the Nobility and Gentry complaining of the Load of Taxes, of empty Farms, of sinking Rents, of slow Payments; when the Merchant and the Shop-keeper are as sensibly affected with the loss of Trade, with small Profits, and bad Debts; in This calamitous Situation, we see no Abatement in Luxury, Voluptuousness, and every kind of wasteful Prodigality. The Goddess of Pleasure has her Variety of Temples; her Mattins, and her Vespers. Her Worship is crowdedly attended, and pompously solemniz'd with Musick; in the Morning at Breakfast Rooms; at Conforts and Theatres in the Evening. --- But, in the Regularity of your Conduct we see the happy Effects of a serious well-grounded Sense of Duty; a decent Support of the Dignity of your Station; Politeness with Moderation; Generosity

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sity with Frugality ; prudent Oeconomy with a just Regard to the Demands of Friendship and Humanity ; the Consequence of which is, that you do a great deal of Good, and enjoy a great deal of Happiness, without hurting your own Fortune, or injuring Others. A riotous Profuseness is like an Inundation, that owes its Rise to some Violence in Nature, and produces the most mischievous Effects ; while your Even and Uniform Hospitality is like a River, fed by a rich Spring, that flows, not with a dangerous Torrent, but a smooth Tide that serves the real Purposes of Life ; serves for Use, for Ornament, and for Pleasure ; while your private Charities, like subterraneous Currents, are gliding constantly, but invisibly, thro' secret Channels, and rising up in proper Places for the Refreshment of the Needy. — But, Sir, tho' you are a Pattern and a Reproach to Persons of Rank and Fortune in the Discharge of the other relative Duties, you are more peculiarly so in the most delicate Article of Human Life, conjugal Fidelity and Affection. If the Object of your tender Regard and respectful Complaisance may seem to Take something from the Merit of That part of your Conduct, by being so highly worthy of it, This is only an Instance of your Felicity, in having your Pleasure and your Duty so closely united. — Every real Principle is uniform ; but there is no solid Foundation for any real Principle of Virtue, but Religion on I

viii *DEDICATION.*

am not surprized when I hear Persons talking much of Honour while in private they'll betray their Friend to gratify their Lust, and in publick betray their Country to serve their Avarice and Ambition. Nor, do I wonder that a Gentleman who makes a Conscience of doing his Duty to his Maker should behave so properly towards his Neighbour. — As the Uniformity of your discharge of the common Duties of a private Station cannot naturally be accounted for, any other way than by resolving it into your settled Belief of the great Truths and a frequent Attendance upon the affecting Offices of Religion, so your disinterested Attachment to the Good of the Publick, without any particular personal Views, could have no other Cause, of Force sufficient to preserve such a Steadiness of Behaviour. This, if we may believe History, has been as evident from the Corruption of many pretended Patriots in former Parliaments, as it was in the Integrity with which you served your Country for so many Years, without seeking, or desiring any Place at Court; without ever, out of party Zeal, or Humour, lifting your Self in the Service of any Set of Men, but voting according to your cool Judgment, only with a view to the real Tendency of the Bills in question. — Both of you were equally true to your ruling Motives of Action. They constantly gratified their Passions, and serv'd their own Turns, for want

DEDICATION. *in*

of a sufficient Inducement to prefer the publick Good to private Regards; you pursued the Reverse of This narrow Scheme, because Religion had open'd your Heart, and enlarg'd your Prospects, and made it your Inclination and Interest, upon the whole, to consult the Welfare of the Community.

And, now, Sir, having reflected upon those Particulars of your Character which I have mentioned, I see the Source of That open, frank and affable Behaviour, That uninterrupted and inoffensive Cheerfulness, which is so distinguishing a Part of it. When the Mind is at peace with its self, the whole Man is easy and free. Self-Complacency naturally begets an obliging Disposition. An Ingenuous Aspect usually Accompanies an Undesigning Heart. Conscious Integrity needs no Arts of Concealment. For, why should not a Man appear to be what he is, when he is what every valuable Person must Admire and Love? Why should such a one put Himself to the pain of wearing a Disguise, any more than a fine Woman should wear a Mask, only to hide her Charms? Religion and Virtue are the only Support of a serene Joy; a Joy, that is more lasting and more agreeable than a boisterous Swell of Blood and Spirits, that is sometimes at a very low Ebb, and oftner gives Disgust than Pleasure to the Company. An innocent Imagination preserves every one from being offended with any thing indecent in its Con-

x DEDICATION.

versation; and Good Nature takes care that whoever is the Subject of its Raillery may bear a part in the Laugh.

I justly fear, Sir, that you grow very uneasy at sitting so long for a Picture that is likely to be an unfinish'd one at last. Sir, I did not hope to be able to draw an advantageous Likeness, yet I flatter my Self that all your Friends would have known it, if I had not put your Name to it. Though I cannot give the proper Colouring, much less the agreeable Air and graceful Attitude, I must be an egregious Bungler, if I miss the great Lines and principal Features, the just Proportion and Symmetry of the Parts. And, therefore, you must pardon me, Sir, if I detain you a little longer, while I mention one Thing more, because I could not pardon my self if I should omit it; I mean, your particularly kind Behaviour to the Clergy. This proves your religious Principles as strongly as a Contempt of us and a rude Omission of the usual Tokens of Respect which Gentlemen of any Breeding shew to one another, plainly indicate Infidelity, Irreligion, or gross Ignorance. You, Sir, as a Gentleman behave towards us in a Genteel Manner; as a Christian you esteem us very Highly in Love for the sake of our Honourable and Useful Function, a rational Sense of Religion and a low Opinion of the Offices, or an unfriendly Disposition towards

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towards the Person, of a Clergyman, being an Impossibility in Nature. To have said less on This Amiable Part of your Character would have been both Ingratitude and Injustice; and should I say more; it might not be thought altogether decent. I beg leave to Subscribe my Self,

S I R,

Your most Respectful and

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Obliged Humble Servant,

Will. Webster.

towards the Person of a Clergyman, being
an Insuperableness in Nature. To have his
less on This Amiable Part of your Character
would have been both laudable and in-
justice; and should I say more; it might
not be thought altogether decent. I beg
leave to subscribe my self,

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PREFACE.

Obliged Humble Servant

I Have but very little to say to the Reader
by Way of PREFACE.

It has been so much the Custom, even
with Persons of the first Character as Au-
thors, to collect some of their scatter'd Pieces
and publish them together in a Volume, that, I
presume, I need not make any Apology for
taking a Common Liberty.

But I have taken another Liberty which
may stand in need of Candour from my Sub-
scribers.—I have chang'd some of the Sub-
jects since I gave out my first Proposals;
which I did by the Advice, and at the Re-
quest,

P R E F A C E. xiii

quest, of particular Friends.—The Two Discourses on the Resurrection of our Saviour, I was advised to leave out of the Collection, because the Subject has been exhausted, by Other Writers, especially by that most excellent Writer, the Author of The Trial of the Witnesses, and the late judicious Defence of it; which must give Satisfaction to all who are capable of Conviction.

The two Discourses on Speculative Doctrines were thought to be of more Consequence than any that I have left out.

The two Sermons on the Study of the Scriptures I was induced to reprint, upon an Information that they had occasion'd some Young Clergymen to turn their Thoughts that Way, very much to their Satisfaction, as well as Advantage; which makes me willing to hope that That may have the same good Effect on Others.

The Discourse on Patronage it was thought proper to add, because it is not only on an Important Subject, but altogether New. And, since I determin'd to reprint it I have made some Corrections and Improvements. When it was first printed it had the Honour to meet with the warmest Approbation from some who have since acted in Opposition to the Doctrine there advanced. Whether their cool Opinion be alter'd, I cannot presume to say, but the
Ar-

Arguments, I am very certain, continue to be the same; and deserve seriously to be reconsider'd by all such as have any serious Sense of Religion. If I have spoken with so much Freedom, without just Grounds for it, on any Subject that affects the Conduct of my Superiors in Church and State, I deserve the severest Censure, and ask no Mercy; but, if my Doctrine and Reflections be not only true, but seasonable, and of the nearest Concernment to every valuable Interest in This and the Next Life, I regard not Censure of any kind. Want of Reverence for publick Characters and publick Authority is a sure Sign of Ignorance and Depravity; and nothing more plainly proves our Corruption to be General than the General Insensibility to all Decency and Decorum; but, the highest Reverence, the first Regard is due to Religion, to Virtue, and the Good of Mankind, the Grand Objects of all Government; and a steady Adherence to these Interests, without any Regard to Secular Views, is the most Honourable Part that human Nature can act upon this Stage of Life, and will meet with the most Glorious Applause in the other World, the Approbation of a Being of Infinite Perfections, in the Presence of an Infinite Number of the most perfect Creatures. When I was coming into the World I had a very mean Opinion of Worldly Motives, but now, when I am going out of it, I should
most

most heartily despise my own Understanding if, in Matters of Duty, I found myself capable of fearing any thing but my Maker, or of Giving the Consideration of Eternity, but the Second Place in my Esteem and Affections.

I have Reasons for not printing the Names of my Subscribers, but I take this Opportunity of Returning my Thanks to every One who has thought me worthy of the least Encouragement; but more particularly to my LORDS the BISHOPS, for their particular Respect and Kindness on this Occasion.

I must inform my Readers that the Letters on Providence and the Desire of Fame were sent me for the Use of the Miscellany by the Rev. Mr. Jackson of Ardly near Colchester; and I have inserted them in this Collection, in order to enrich and embellish it. The rest of the Collection belongs solely to myself.

TWO DISCOURSES

THE

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MATTH. X. 16.

Behold, I send you forth as Sheep in the Midst of Wolves: Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.

WE have in this Chapter an Account of our Saviour's Appointment of the twelve Apostles to their Office; of the bad Reception which they were to expect; with Instructions how they were to behave under it. In the Words of my Text our Lord told them that they were going like harmless inoffensive *Sheep*, or *Lambs*, among Men as fierce and cruel and ravenous as *Wolves*; who would be as eager to persecute and destroy them out of *Malice*, as Beasts of Prey are to devour in order to satisfy their Hunger. They were to be cited before *Governors* and *Kings*, Persons in *Authority* over them, to whom they were not permitted by their Religion to make any *Resistance* had they been in a Capacity of doing it. They were to preach Doctrines so contrary to the reigning Lusts of the World that they were sure to provoke a general Odium and Enmity, however inoffensive their Carriage might be. But, *still*, they were to give

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as little Offence as a faithful Discharge of their Function would admit of, and to *avoid* Dangers wherever they could do it without being wanting to their Duty, and forfeiting their *Innocence*.—
“ Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.”

The learned Dr. Hammond is of Opinion that, though BE YE carries a *preceptive* Form, yet those Words are here, as in some other Places, only *predictive* of what would happen, or by Way of *Permission* only; that if they took Care of their *Innocence*, they *might* be as *wary* and *cautious* as they pleased, though they were not *obliged in Duty* to be so.

But, with great Deference to so able a Critick I speak it, I can see no Ground for any such Distinction in *this Place*.

For, 1st, *Be ye* relating *equally* to both Clauses, to the *Harmlessness of the Dove* and to the *Wisdom of the Serpent*, there is no Reason why they should carry the Force of a *Precept* in one Case while they were *permissive* only in the other. If the Apostles were here *commanded* to be as *harmless as Doves*, they were at the same Time *commanded* to be as *wise as Serpents*; and it was as impossible for them to be *perfectly innocent* without *Wisdom*, as it was to be *truly wise* without *Innocence*.

But 2^{dly}, whether we consider the *Success of their Doctrine*, or *their own Preservation*, it must have been the Intention of our Saviour to inforce this *Wisdom* upon them as Matter of *strict Duty*.

1st, As to the *Success of their Doctrine*, it was certainly Matter of *indispensable Obligation* to use all the Arts of honest Address and Insinuation by which

which they might hope to remove unreasonable Prejudices and conciliate the good Opinion and Affections of their Hearers, in order to their Conversion. It could not be left to their Option whether they should study the most effectual Methods of promoting *Christianity* and the *Salvation* of those to whom they were to preach it. Tho' they were not allowed to *conceal*, or *alter* any necessary Point of Doctrine in Order to adapt themselves and their Preaching to the Sentiments and Dispositions of their Hearers, yet they were not only *permitted*, but *commanded* to preach necessary Truths in the most *acceptable* and *engaging* Manners.

How can it be *lawful* to *conceal* or *alter* any necessary Point of Doctrine, *Self-preservation*, by all *lawful* Means, cannot be the Subject of a bare *Permission* only, because it cannot in any Instance be Matter of an *indifferent Nature*. Wherever they could, *consistently with other* Obligations, preserve themselves, they were *strictly obliged* to do it; in all those Cases where we can suppose it to have been their *Duty* to *hazard* their Lives, they could not at the same Time be *at Liberty* to *avoid* the Danger of Martyrdom. When our Saviour directed them, if they were *persecuted in one City* to *flee into another*, he did not mean to leave it to *their Choice*, whether they would *flee*, or *stay* and suffer Persecution in that City. The Direction, no doubt, was given because the Divine Wisdom knew that their *Flight* would best answer the Ends of their Mission; but had no such Direction been given, the *Reason* itself, as far as they were able to judge of it, would have been an *Obligation*: By which I mean, that in all Cases where they had Reason to believe, that by *avoiding* Persecution they could discharge their Com-

mission *more effectually*, than by *suffering*, or of avoiding it without any *Hindrance* to their Success, it became their *Duty* to do it, with all the Art that was, in it self, *innocent*. But, indeed, they were constantly under the infallible Guidance of the *Spirit*, and knew, as our Saviour did, when the proper Time of their Suffering was come. The greatest Difficulty is with Respect to *private Christians* in the primitive Times, who voluntarily crouded in such Numbers, and perfectly *contended* for Martyrdom. But, as *Miracles* were not ceased in those Times of *Persecution*, they seemed to have been under a Sort of *Divine Impulse* that prompted them to *court* Death, as well as assisted them by *Divine Grace* to bear their Tortures, not only with *Patience*, but with *Cheerfulness* and *Joy*. For, in the *ordinary* Course of Things it cannot be accounted for, how so many Persons in their Nature timorous and habituated to *Delicacy* should at once be so wholly changed as to *strive* for what before they would have taken as much Pains to *shun*, and bear with such Fortitude and Firmness of Mind those Pains the *very Apprehension* of which was *naturally* apt to have sunk their Spirits. — This, therefore, being an *extraordinary* Case, it cannot be drawn into a *common* Rule of Duty for all *Christians*. But, there is no Reason to fear that in *these* Times we should be guilty of a *criminal Excess* in running ourselves into *needless Difficulties* and sustaining *unnecessary Losses* in our *temporal* Concerns for the Sake of *Religion*. On the contrary, we have too much Reason to guard ourselves, and caution others, against a *worldly* and *serpentine* Wisdom that betrays Men into unchristian Practices; into servile and mean Compliances; into

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into Craft and Insincerity. I shall, therefore, in Obedience to that Authority which makes it my Duty to preach on this Occasion, honestly suggest the most useful Observations that I am capable of raising from this momentous and nice Subject; but with that humble and respectful Deference that is due to my Reverend Brethren, and in Hopes of the most favourable and candid Acceptance from every one that hears me. —

What I propose is, to endeavour to state the *Notion*, and shew the *great Usefulness* of *true Wisdom*, in the Discharge of the Duties of our *several Stations*; and in the *common Intercourse* of Life: And *this*, with respect to *Christians* in general, and the *Clergy* in particular.

First, then, let us consider wherein *true Wisdom* consists, and how serviceable it is in the Discharge of the Duties of our *several Stations*.

True Wisdom may be considered as relating to the *End* of our Actions, or to the *Means* of obtaining that End.—As it relates to the *End* of our Actions, we are then *truly wise* when we propose in our Actions the most *proper End*.—With regard to *ourselves*, we then propose the most *proper End* when we aim at the *greatest Good*, which is the Happiness promised in the *next Life* to those who faithfully discharge their Duty in *this*. For, *that* State of Happiness being so *infinitely* superior in *Degree* and *Duration* to the *biggest* of our *earthly* Enjoyments, if we propose to ourselves any other Ends, or take any Measures in the Pursuit of them that are inconsistent with the glorious Expectations of a good *Christian*; or if, in order to avoid *temporal* Inconveniencies and Sufferings, we run the Hazzard of *eternal* Tor-

ments, we act very *unwisely* in preferring a *lesser Good* to a *greater*, a *greater Evil* to a *less*. And *this* I conceive to be the grand Error of Mankind in general; not that they act *improperly*, or *imprudently* in the *Management* of their Schemes, so much as in the *Choice* of them; not that they use *unfit Means* to answer their Views, but that their Views are low and unworthy of a *Christian's Faith*.—The *grand Scheme* which all of us ought to pursue, is, *eternal Happiness*; *this* is the Prospect which we should habitually have in our Sight; towards *this* Point every Step should be directed. All our Employments, together with the Success and Advantages that may attend a prudent Prosecution of them, should not be considered as an *ultimate*, but *subordinate End*. As this is a State of *Probation* only, wherein we are to qualify ourselves for a better by acting *properly* in our several Stations, by a due Use and Application of our intellectual Faculties and a regular Direction of our Affections, we must follow our Occupations upon *right Motives*, and in *such a Manner* as shall be consistent with the Security and Improvement of our *future State of Happiness*; for, otherwise, all our Skill and Dexterity in the Exercise of them will not intitle us to the Character of being as *wise as Serpents*.—That I may be the better understood, I shall be a little more particular.—Take any *secular Employment* for an Instance—No Man was created for the Sake of that Employment, but for the Enjoyment of *God* in his more immediate Presence, and for the Society of *Saints* and *Angels* and *just Men* made perfect in those heavenly Mansions. The Exercise of his Employment here on *Earth* is only *relative* to that more perfect State, and there-

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therefore ought to be regulated by it. Every Man, no doubt, should study to understand the nature of his worldly Business, and how to pursue it by such lawful Means as are most likely to prove successful. This was God's Design when he placed him in that particular Station; and without this *worldly Wisdom*, or *Prudence*, the proper *Ends* of it cannot be answered. This, therefore, is Part of that *Duty* which God requires of him as a *Condition* of obtaining a Place in a future State of Glory and Happiness, and, consequently, he cannot be either *truly wise*, or *innocent*, without *endeavouring* to discharge it in the *best Manner*. But, then, there are other Things required, *besides* the Discharge of his particular Calling; some Duties to be paid immediately to God; some Part of his Time reserved for *publick* and *private Worship*, and for other Religious Uses. This is what every Man, let his Calling be what it will, is obliged to do, except in Cases of *Mercy* and *Charity*. And, as our Perfection *here* and our Happiness *hereafter* will be in Proportion to our Improvement in *Christian* Graces and Virtues, and our Improvement depends upon the Use of the above-mentioned Means, the more Time any one spares from the *necessary* Duties of his *worldly* Employment for those *spiritual* Concerns, he is in Reality so much the *wiser*, inasmuch as he prefers an increase of Glory and Happiness in an *endless* State to an Accumulation of Wealth or Honours in this transitory Life; which are Enjoyments as inferior in Excellency, as they are less durable in their Nature. And if the Conduct of many, who are esteemed by themselves and others as Persons of a more than ordinary Degree of *Strenuousness*, were estimated

by this Rule, their imaginary *Innocence* would be but *Guilt*, and their boasted *Wisdom* no better than the *greatest Folly*.

But, further.—A Man is to consider that the *End* of his Calling does not center wholly in *himself* and *Family*, but reaches to the Good of the *Community*, of his *Fellow Members* in the Society where he lives; and therefore, as no Man can lawfully exercise it in Violation of the immutable Rules of *Justice* and *Equity*, so neither ought he, for his own particular Advantage, to exercise it in such a Manner as shall be inconsistent with *publick Good*, which is a more noble End than the Happiness of any *particular Man*, or *Family*, and consequently must be intended by Providence in the Appointment of so many several Stations in Life. This is another Article of Enquiry which would detract very much from the Character of many others, and turn what often obtains the venerable Title of *Wisdom* into *Fraud*, *Oppression*, *Worldly-mindedness*, and *criminal Self-Interest*.

If from *secular* Employments we pass to those whose Business it is to perform the Offices of *Religion*, and to teach the *Duties* of it, this being a Function of much greater Importance to the Happiness of those who exercise it, of those with whom they are immediately concerned, and of the Community, they are under the strongest Obligations, and have the most engaging Motives to discharge it *wisely*. And if we consider the Nature of this Profession, the natural Perverseness of Mankind, and the great Corruption of the present Age, there is the most urgent Occasion for all the *Wisdom of the Serpent*, and the greatest Danger of losing some Part of the *Innocency*.

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gency of the Dove. As to the several *Abilities* and *Attainments* requisite for a faithful Discharge of the *ministerial* Office, they do not fall so directly under my present Consideration as the *actual Exercise* of it. I shall only observe, that as they are previous Requisites, they ought studiously to be improv'd.

1st, The Clergy being appointed as *Guardians* of the *Truth* of *Christianity* and its *Doctrines*, as well as *Stewards* of its *Mysteries*, whenever our Religion is opposed by *Infidels* and *Scoffers*, it is as much *their* Duty to appear publickly in its Defence, as it is the Duty of a *Garrison* to defend a Town that is besieged; only with this Difference, that *they* must never surrender let their Distress be ever so great. But it is a very great Satisfaction to me that I need say no more on this Head, than barely to take Notice, that, as *Infidelity* never appeared more bare-fac'd in any Age or Country than it has of late Years in these Kingdoms, so they never were more learnedly and judiciously answered by the *Bishops* and Others of the *Clergy*; and that every Attempt to *weaken* has in the Event only served to *strengthen* and *establish* the Truth of our Religion.

2^{dly}, As to the Business of *preaching*, the Success of it, both in Respect to *Matter*, and *Manner*, must depend very much on *Wisdom*, i. e. on the *Judgment* and *Discretion* of the *Preacher* in adapting his Discourses to the particular *Wants* and *Dispositions* of his Hearers. There will in all Places be some *Doctrines* and *Duties* more especially *seasonable*; and, as there will be among different Men a great Variety of *Tempers*, *Humours*, *Errors*, and *Vices*, arising not only from *Constitution*,

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tution, but from *Education* and *Circumstances*, especially in large and populous Towns, it requires some Insight into human Nature and some Experience of human Life, in order to know how to suit Instruction Exhortation and Reproof to them. And as to *Exhortation*, and *Reproof*, in particular, Art may very *innocently* and very *usefully* be employed, in suiting them to the Persons to whom they are addressed, where it is done only for the Sake of prevailing the more, and consistently with *Sincerity* and *Truth*; as a Medicine may be the more effectual by being made agreeable to the *Constitution* of the Patient. *Necessary* Doctrines *must* be preached, publick Vices *must* be publickly reprov'd, and wherever Exhortation is wanted it *must* be used *whether Men will bear, or whether they will forbear*; or else the *Innocency of the Dove* will not be preserved: But all the *Wisdom of the Serpent* may be shewn in making Choice of the most engaging Methods of discharging those difficult Duties. The first Preachers of *Christianity* were, indeed, illiterate and artless Men, and God made Choice of such Instruments for very wise Reasons; but, to shew that great Talents and Attainments, that the *enticing Words of Man's Wisdom*, as well as great *Plainness* and *Simplicity of Speech*, might sometimes be of the greatest Use, for one of his Apostles he made Choice of one of the greatest *Scholars* and finest *Orators* of his own, or of any other Age; who carried with him all the Force of *human Eloquence* as well as a *Demonstration of the Spirit of God*. Not to mention any other Instances, his Epistles to the *Romans*, and that to *Philemon*, are Examples, and a Justification of the greatest Delicacy of Address.

3dly,

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3dly, As to *private* Advice and Admonition the same Observations will hold equally. It is not only consistent with *the Innocency of the Dove* to employ *the Wisdom of the Serpent*; not only *lawful*, but incumbent as a *Duty*, to suit the *Manner* of giving them to the *Nature* of the *Receiver*, that they may be the better received, and produce the greater Effect. But, then, while we study by proper Mixtures to make this *spiritual Physick*, naturally disgustful to *most* Constitutions, more agreeable to the *Palate*, and more easy to the *Stomach*, the greatest Care must be taken lest by softening and tempering it too much we destroy the *Force*, and frustrate the *Design* of it.

4thly, To this useful End, of becoming, INNOCENTLY, *all Things to all Men*, it is a commendable Piece of *Wisdom* to study the *Sentiments*, the *Dispositions*, and *Humours* of *Men*; but in order to preserve the *Innocency of the Dove*, we must not use any such *serpentine Subtilty* as will lead to *Diffimulation* and *Flattery*.

5thly, In order to be the more *acceptable*, we may, we *ought* to be *obliging* and *complaisant*, but not to be silent where we ought to speak, or to comply in any Thing that is sinful in its *Nature*, or unbecoming our *Station*.—The more *respectful* we are, the more worthily we behave ourselves; provided always, that we give no One Reason, either by *Expressions*, or *Actions*, to think that we have a better Opinion of him than we really have.—There is an *outward* Respect that is due to *every* one (who is not *directly scandalous*) and there is a *common* Correspondence that ought to be held by a *Minister* with *all* his *People*; and if any one from hence infers too much, to the Advantage of his own Character, it is not *we* that

that deceive him, but he deceives *himself*; by making That *personal*, which is only *general*: But all *particular* Compliments and Civilities, all *Intimacies*, and Marks of *Friendship*, without a *particular* good Opinion and *Regard*, these are *disingenuous* and *unchristian*. And, considering how natural it is to desire to pass quietly through the World, and what Opportunities there are of making Advantage of such criminal Artifices, we cannot too narrowly watch ourselves. Upon the whole, I am very much afraid that a great many People impose upon themselves, as well as upon the ignorant Part of Mankind, and pass in their *own* Judgment, as well as in *common Fame*, for more *notable* Persons than others, only because they want that Simplicity and godly Sincerity, which are the greatest Ornament of human Nature, the most amiable Qualities in the Eyes of all good Men, and the distinguishing Characteristick of a true Disciple of him *in whom there was no Guile*, nor any *Deceit* either in his *Words* or *Actions*.

What I have said under the two last Heads, concerning *private Advice and Admonition*, and the Use of *Wisdom* in adapting them to the several Persons with whom we are concerned, belongs not only to the *Clergy*, but to all the *Laity*, forasmuch as they are *all* directed by an express Precept to *rebuke their Neighbour*, and *not suffer Sin upon him*; and required by the Law of *Charity*, or *brotherly Love*, to promote his Happiness by every Method that is in their Power.

Thus have I taken Mankind as engaged in some *Business*, *Profession*, or *Office*; and considered the Duty of acting *prudently*, or *wisely* in the

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Execution of them, in order to answer their proper Ends; and have, likewise, laid down some general Rules for the Direction of our Conduct in this Respect. Which brings me to consider,

2dly, The Duty and Usefulness of acting wisely in the common Intercourse of Life.

This is a Matter, as I apprehend, of much greater Consequence than is generally thought, and no where, that I know of, stated in the Manner which I have proposed to myself.

1. First, then, I lay it down for an undoubted Truth, that *Prudence* or *Wisdom* in our ordinary Behaviour is a *moral Virtue*; that as all Sin is Folly, so all Folly, wherever avoidable by us, is *sinful*; and that we shall be *accountable* for all such imprudent Actions, as well as for those committed against an *express Precept*, though the *Guilt* will be lessened in Proportion to the Difficulty of *determining* the prudential Part, for Want of a *plain positive* Rule to direct us, and by Reason of the great Variety of Circumstances upon which it may depend.

My general Doctrine, I think, may be proved by two very short and clear Arguments.—First, nothing can be more evident than that all Creatures, capable of knowing and observing the Will of their Creator, are obliged to conform themselves to it; and it is as evidently his Will that they should *endeavour*, in every Instance of their Conduct, to act *prudently*, or *wisely*, i. e. *properly*, or *rationaly*. It can never be agreeable to an *infinitely wise* Being that any *rational* Creature should act *irrationally*; as every one does that acts *improperly*, or *imprudently*. If we put it into other Words, the Thing will appear unde-

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undeniably plain to every Capacity.—God wills that all *rational* Beings should act *rationally*.—Now, as *Prudence* and *Propriety of Behaviour* signify the very same Thing, so *properly* and *rationally* are Terms of the same Import; so that whatever is *rational* must be *fit* and *proper*; as also whatever is *unfit* and *improper* is as necessarily *irrational*. Strictly speaking, therefore, *Prudence*, or *Wisdom*, is but another Word for *moral Virtue*.—For, what is *moral Virtue*, but acting agreeably to the *Relation* and *Fitness* of Things? And what is *Prudence*, or *Wisdom*, but acting *suitably* to every *Circumstance* and *Situation of Life*? Where, then, is the Difference between them? But the Truth of my Position will appear from another equally plain, but shorter Argument.

2dly, As a Being of *infinite Goodness* must by a *moral Necessity* will the *Happiness* of all his Creatures at all Times, so their Happiness, in every Instance of it, must be the Result of *Propriety of Behaviour*.—The Welfare of every Thing must depend upon the *Regularity of its Movements*. A Watch, or any other Machine, cannot go right without a due *Operation* of all its Parts.—And thus it is with the *animal* and *social Life*. There must be some Degree of *Disorder* whenever any of the Parts do not perform their proper Office, and it is impossible but that some Degree of *Inconveniency* and *Uneasiness* must be the Consequence of every *Impropriety* in *human Conduct*.

The general Doctrine being thus stated and proved, let us carry it down into *common Life*, that we may be fully apprised of the *Truth* and
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Consequence of it.—Every one's Experience may serve to convince him that a *prudent* or *proper* Behaviour will unavoidably affect our *own* and our *Neighbour's* Happiness, and that a Miscarriage, seemingly the most trifling, may produce great and irreparable Mischiefs. A Person's whole Fortune has been ruin'd by an unseasonable Indulgence of his Humour, or an ill-judg'd Piece of satyrical Wit. The fairest Character may be stained, and the most innocent Mind suspected for an unguarded Action, or Expression. As the Honour of a long Series of great Victories may be all lost by the Loss of a single Battle at last, so in vulgar Estimation a whole Life of Piety may be sullied in a few Minutes, and the wisest Person disrespected, if not despised, for *one* real, or imaginary Oversight, the Matter of which, it may be, is not directly sinful in itself. Such is the Malice, the Envy, and Ignorance of Mankind. Nay, a whole Family, a whole Neighbourhood, a whole Kingdom may be inflamed by a single Indiscretion. The most useful and best-form'd Design may be frustrated by one false Step in common Conduct. From whence it appears that, though our *imprudent* Actions may not be contrary to any *particular express* Precept of Religion, yet, as they are in their Effects mischievous to ourselves and others, they fall under that *general* Law which requires us to study our *own* Good and the Good of our *Fellow-creatures*. Thus, for Instance, a prudent Choice of *Friends* and *Acquaintance* and a proper Behaviour to them tend greatly to the Comfort and Felicity of human Life; so that, though Religion does not descend to *particular Instructions* in these Points, it teaches us to have Regard to the

general Ends of Friendship, Acquaintance, and Conversation; to be careful how we enter into improper Intimacies and Familiarities; how we demean ourselves under them; how we regulate our ordinary Conversation, since upon these Points our mutual Happiness turns. The Law of Benevolence tells us that we are by all lawful Means to obtain the Esteem and Love of Mankind; and we are no more at Liberty to say, or do, weak and injudicious Things which will lessen our Character and Interest with wise People, than we are at Liberty to lay violent Hands upon ourselves. Nay, the general Rule which the Apostle lays down concerning giving Offence to *weak Consciences* will hold in Respect to *weak Judgments* in Matters of this Nature. We are, for *their* Sakes, if not for our *own*, to have so much Regard to their Opinion, however erroneous, as not to give them any *needless* Occasion to think *meanly* of us. For, supposing (what is rarely the Case) that we are so absolutely independent of *them* that their Opinion of us cannot any Way affect *our* Interest of Happiness, yet *they* may not be so independent on *us* but that the Loss of their Esteem may lose us the Means of serving *them*, since our Capacity of being useful to others will always be in Proportion to their Opinion of us and Regard for us.—Besides—there is a Pleasure in esteeming and loving others, and by depriving them of their Esteem and Love for us we deprive them of so much Happiness, and do them a real Injury. Contemptuous Thoughts are disgustful, and Disgust, or Dislike, is a disagreeable Act of the Mind; so that in Proportion as we make ourselves despicable we make every generous and good Man *uneasy*. There is also, to every *honest* Mind, a Plea-

Pleasure in the Consciousness of being esteemed and beloved; and there cannot be a surer Sign of a deprav'd Disposition than an Insensibility to Reputation and Censure. Popularity, considered rightly, as the Reward of Merit, and the Means of doing Good, is a very valuable Possession, and the Desire of it highly becoming a *Christian*. Indeed, such as are *independent* of the World, as to their *outward Circumstances*, are too apt to be indifferent what Mankind think of them; but such Conduct is generally *imprudent* with Regard to *themselves*, and always *unchristian* with Regard to *others*.—*Studious* Persons, who have lived pretty much by *themselves*, very often contract *Particularities* of *Humour* and *Behaviour*, and are afterwards too much inclined to indulge them, to the Prejudice of their Character and Influence in the World; but, for the Reasons already suggested respecting *ourselves* and *others*, every Man is obliged to conform to the innocent Customs and Manners of the Society, as such a Conformity will prove an infallible Means of making us the more useful by making us the more agreeable.

The Sum of the Matter is this.—Every *avoidable* imprudent Action, as it is an *irrational* Act of a *rational* Being, is *immoral*, and displeasing to the *Wisdom* of that omniscient Intelligence which gave us our Understanding with an Intent that we should in all our Actions be guided by it.

—Every Act of *Imprudence*, as an *Impropriety* or *Irregularity* that must in its Consequences prove in some Degree *hurtful* to us, is, for *that* Reason also, *immoral* and displeasing to the *infinite Goodness* of God, who wills *Happiness* to all his Creatures, and the *greatest Degree* of it that their Natures are capable of.—All *imprudent*

dent Actions are farther *immoral*, as they are injurious to *others*, and thereby a Breach of *Charity*. Charity requires us by all possible Means to promote *universal Happiness*; and it is incontestibly clear, from the Nature of *Man* and of *Society*, that, as every Man will be more or less happy himself, so will he be more or less useful to the World, in Proportion to the Degree of his *Prudence*, i. e. *Propriety of Behaviour*.

If what I have asserted be true, as it most undoubtedly is, it is as much the Duty of every Man to study the Arts of *human Prudence*, as it is to understand the Nature and Extent of the *moral Precepts*; and in Proportion to the *Importance* of any one's *Station* in Life, and the Difficulty of acting properly in it, rises the Obligation to perpetual Caution and Circumspection. They whose Business it is to teach others their Duty and to lead them by *Example*, as well as by *Precept*, have Occasion for more than ordinary Watchfulness in all their Behaviour. It is not sufficient that their *Intention* is uniformly good, but there must not, if possible, be the very *Appearance* of Evil. They must not only keep clear of all *Suspicion* of GUILT, but endeavour to be a Pattern of *Propriety*, as well as of *Innocence*; not only to cut off all Occasion of *just Censure*, but to command the *highest Esteem*, and attract the *kindest Affection*; which are Things as difficult to gain, as they are useful and desirable in Nature.—Such Persons are more exposed to the Observation of Mankind; *their Conduct* is always examined with more *Severity*, and censured with more *Rigour*. In *them* the *slightest Transgression*, like Objects viewed thro' a *magnifying Glass*, appears an *enormous Crime*; and the

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Eye of *Ill-nature* can multiply as well as magnify, and see as much Demerit in a single Crime and a single Act, as in a Series of various Immoralities. This baneful Quality, like some chymical Preparations, can in an instant give a Tincture and Foulness to the clearest Characters, and turn *Improprieties* into great *Immoralities*; nay, before such Judges the greatest Offenders would stand the best Chance, if not to be acquitted, yet at least to be pardon'd; and the more insignificant any one were, the more easily he might avoid Censure. The most uniform Course of *Piety* and *Virtue*, the most upright *Integrity*, productive of a Series of worthy and useful Actions, and attended with a Train of the most lovely Qualities; all these united would be so far from procuring Candour that they would only make such Judges the more strict in their Examination, and the more rigid in their Judgment; Superior Merit, instead of attoning for little Escapes, would but aggravate them; and those Spots would appear the larger and the blacker by being viewed in a Character that shines with so much Lustre, while they would be wholly imperceptible, or seem inconsiderable and hardly worth Notice, in a less bright Object. Thus, the more Respect any one deserved upon the whole, the less he would meet with, if in every Instance he did not act up to the Superiority of his Character.—This you will say (and justly you may say it) would be most unjust and ungenerous Treatment. But no Matter. This does not alter the Nature and Consequences of Things. Disesteem and Contempt, whether they be deserved or not, will produce the same mischievous Effects; and, therefore, instead of complaining of *Ill-nature* and *Ignorance*, we must all be the more

watchful and circumspect to disappoint them. If the World were not *very wicked and very ignorant*, there would be less Occasion for a Ministry; and the *more* wicked and ignorant they are, the more Pains *we* must take to make them and our selves wiser and better.—There is one Rule, *which*, if well observed, will go a great Way towards *procuring* and *preserving* their Esteem and Affection; and that is, to convince them (which may be done) that we sincerely and affectionately wish their Happiness, and mean to do them all the Good in our Power. This Rule, steadily pursued, cannot fail of some Returns of grateful Regard; and, without this Persuasion of our kind Intentions towards them, the greatest Abilities will not be able to procure a sincere Affection for our Persons, or a due Attention and Influence to our Doctrine.—That the *Clergy* may conscientiously and wisely and affectionately discharge their Function; and that their *People* may esteem them *very highly in Love for their Works Sake*; that there may be between them an uninterrupted Exchange of the kindest Wishes and the kindest Offices, God Almighty grant, for Jesus Christ his Sake. *Amen.* *To God, &c.*

The following Letter, formerly published in the Weekly Miscellany, having such an immediate Relation to this Sermon, I thought it might be both pertinent and agreeable to have it inserted here, tho' in some few Things they coincide.

Mr. HOOKER,

AS a Letter which I lately sent you upon *Prudence* was favour'd with a Place in your Paper, and met with a tolerable Reception from your Readers, I have ventur'd to send you some farther Thoughts upon the Subject. *Curiosity* and *Vanity*, two of the strongest Motives, made me very inquisitive concerning the Sentiments of the *Publick* upon my Performance. And, as I was not known to be the Author of it, I could decently mention it in Conversation without being put out of Countenance either by their Censures, or their Compliments. I made the Tour of *Westminster* and *London*, not without my Share of Pleasure and Mortification. I set out from *St. James's*, and, would you believe it? I travel'd almost to *Temple-Bar* before I met a Creature of your Acquaintance, and quite up into the City before any of your Readers were your Friends. I shall not trouble you with a compleat Narrative of my Travels; but some few Occurrences I shall beg Leave to mention, as they will naturally introduce what I have to offer.

Mr. *Careless*, tho' a Person of some Sense as well as Good-nature, could not bring himself to conceive the least Notion of *Prudence*, as a Matter of any Concern to a young Gentleman of Leisure and Fortune. It might, he thought, become

grey Hairs, and be of some Use to Men of Business and Schemes; but *his* only Business was, to do nothing; his only Scheme of Life, to be disengag'd from the Incumbrance of Thought; to talk and live *Extempore*. I left this Gentleman to be made a Convert by the only Argument that is likely to affect him, *Experience*.

Mr. *Sprightly* had no great Objection against the Substance of my Essay, but seem'd a little too much concern'd at the Intimation about the indiscreet Use of *Wit*, and the bad Effects of it; giving broad Hints, as if I should have been more indulgent if I had been possess'd of a larger Share of it myself. This was a tender Point; and, like *Solomon's* Order for dividing the Child, it had discovered the Parent if by good Luck Prudence had not got the better of Resentment. This Species of Men are more incorrigible than the other. There is some Room to hope that *Carelessness* may settle into Thought and Consideration as the animal Life gradually dies. The Indolent may be roused into Circumspection by the Smart that usually attends *Folly*. But the Vanity of a *Wit* is never to be worn out of the Constitution by Age, nor cur'd by Experience. If he has suffered ever so often, or so much, in the Opinion of wise Men, and in his Interest, the next Moment he will sacrifice his Friend, or himself, to the Reputation of his Parts, and lose any Thing rather than his Jest. As far as I have been able to observe, either from Books, or Conversation, *Wits* are seldom of much real Service to the Publick, but oftener do a great deal of Mischief; are generally admired and applauded, but not so much esteemed and sincerely belov'd; as rarely make their own Fortune by their Ingenuity,

nity, as Women do by their Beauty; and are as frequently ruin'd by it.

Mr. *Formal* and Mr. *Slow*, very intimate Friends and nearly related to each other, were better pleased with my Discourse than I was with their Approbation. I soon perceived, by the Turn of their Compliments, that they meant to degrade the excellent and exalted Virtue of *Prudence*, the Virtue of generous and great Minds, into that *lower Sort of Discretion*, mention'd in a late *Essay on the Fates of Clergymen*, by as great a Wit as this, or perhaps any other Age has produc'd, who is not always the most *prudent* in the Exercise of his extraordinary Talent *. This *little Kind of Discretion* is not properly a *positive*, but a *negative* Quality; as *Darkness* is the Absence of *Light*, and *Black* is properly no Colour. These narrow Minds, made narrower by a contracted Education, have not Vivacity enough to prompt them ever to go out of the Way, but, like the Horse in the Mill, they move, with great Composure of Mind and great Gravity of Behaviour, round their little Circle of Life, admiring the Regularity of their Proceeding. They have not Capacity enough to execute, or not Virtue enough to attempt any thing considerable and difficult, and yet applaud the Felicity of their Conduct in not committing any great Errors, where they had no Opportunity of doing it. They were never guilty of any indiscreet *Satyr* or *Wit*, but there is no more Merit in their Innocence, than in the Chastity of an *Eunuch*. Both are equally impotent; both equally capable of criminal Inclinations. If *Fame* may be credited, we have a *celebrated* Writer, very remarkable for having had a *feeble Body* accom-

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* Dr. *Swift*.

panied by a *lewd Imagination**; and I make no doubt but Mr. *Formal* and Mr. *Slow* have as *strong a Desire*, though as weak an *Ability*, to excel in the *witty Way*, while they effect to decry it as a Wickedness not less abominable than a certain deceased Prelate is reported, by *Dean Swift*, to have thought *Whisk* and *Swabbers*. As I would scorn to reflect on a *weak Constitution*, but that it was haunted by the evil Spirit of *Lust*; and its Professor, by corrupting the Hearts of others with wanton Images, like a Bawd, has industriously propagated a Vice which he could not practise; so it would be cruel Inhumanity to ridicule the natural Defects of the *Dull* and *Heavy* if they had Candour enough to make Allowances for those Faults which they are incapable of committing. But they themselves make Censure a necessary Piece of Chastisement, and a proper Cure of their *Envy* and *Ill-nature*.

Probus has much better Parts, and his Sphere of Action is as much wider, as his Understanding is more enlarged, and his Heart more opened by generous Sentiments and Affections. This Gentleman's Conversation gave me great Pleasure; and his Conduct, as I was informed afterwards, is agreeable to his just Notions. Having a sound Judgment and a comprehensive Knowledge, the little, deceitful, fraudulent Arts of *Vafer* are as useless to him, as they are in themselves detestable. *Vafer*, with a natural Love of Honesty and a Capacity to carry on his Purposes by fair and open Methods, seems to have acquired an *Affection* for Artifice and Subtilty. He immediately applies himself to Wiles and Stratagems, when the simplest Means would be more becoming him and

* Mr. Pope.

and more successful. He cannot transact the most ordinary Affair without an Air of great Management and Shrewdness. The Motive to this Affectation of appearing very *notable* on all Occasions arises from *Vanity* and *Self-conceit*, an Inclination to think himself a Person of superior Talents. But the Effects of this Conduct are worse than the Cause, for they often lead to *Insincerity*, *Falsehood* and *Injustice*; and sometimes, by refining too much upon Management he is too cunning for himself. *Probus* has always an honourable End in View, sees the direct and short Way to it, and pursues it in a strait Course, till he he meets with some Obstruction from the Precepts of his *Religion*, which he never willingly transgresses for the best End in the World. In his *Conversation* he is affable without Hypocrisy. There is some outward Respect due to every one with whom we converse, but he does not use any Expressions, or Behaviour, that may induce another to imagine he thinks better of him than he really does. This he considers as a Violation of the *Christian Law*, and as destructive of that *Distinction* that ought to be preserved between the Deserving, and the Worthless, and between the different Degrees of Merit. *Proteus* has but one *prudential* Rule, and that is, to make himself as agreeable as he can to others, and others as well pleased with themselves. He makes Compliments without any Regard to Truth, and never says an offensive Thing, tho' injured Innocence, the Welfare of an offending Brother, the Truth of his Religion, and the Honour of his Maker demand it. But *Probus* thinks these Methods, however *prudent* they may be esteemed, inconsistent with *Piety*, *Charity* and *common Honesty*.
And

And shall we call HIM *prudent* who is false to his *Neighbour* and to his *God*? *Abditus* is always in the Dark. While he seems to converse with great Freedom and Frankness, he seldom declares his Sentiments and Designs. But *Probus* distinguishes between such Caution as is a proper Guard against the Artifices of the Politick, and an impenetrable Reservedness which too often proceeds from Cowardice, or Insincerity. *Christian Simplicity* prescribes more Openness of Behaviour; *Good-nature* often requires it from us, always disposes us to it. *Mundanus* is just in his Dealings, but excessively greedy. As if he imagined that he came into the World for no other purpose but to get as much of it as possible, and that *Trades* and *Professions* were intended for no other Use beside the particular Advantages of those who follow them, his Notion of *Prudence* is, to mind nothing but his *Worldly Business*, and nobody but *himself* in the prosecution of it. But *Probus* has more extended Views and more generous Sentiments. His Views extend to *Eternity*, and his Happiness includes the Welfare of *Mankind*. Himself he considers as Part of a whole *Community*, and his Station as contributing towards the *general Good*. To aim only at *private Good*, though the *Worldling* will esteem it *Prudence*, is *Selfishness*, inconsistent with the Nature and Ends of Society, and with our own particular Happiness in the last Result of Things. This is more eminently true of the SACRED PROFESSION; the End of which is, the Honour of God and the Salvation of their Fellow Christians, not the Advancement of themselves, and the enriching their Families. To answer those grand Ends should be their only Scheme, the *Reward* of their Labour they should leave

leave to Providence, to be given in what Measure, and at what Time, shall seem best to infinite Wisdom. They will often lose Sight of the true Ends of their Functions, if they be intent upon Projects for their own Promotion; and miss of their Eternal Reward, if they be too solicitous about a Temporary one. In short, there is not a *Character* in Life but what assume to themselves the Title of *Prudent*. Even the *Sycophant*, that creeping *Ear-wig*, the lowest Creature in human Shape, thinks himself *exceedingly discreet* while in compliment to the Malice of a Patron he sacrifices the Innocent, is rude and ungrateful to his faithful Friends; *very notable*, because he will stoop to such Actions as are below a *Christian*, a *Gentleman*, or a *Man*. It is pity that a Title in such Esteem, as that of *Prudent*, should ever be given to *irreligious* and *immoral* Actions, but the greatest Part of human Conduct which passes in the World under that honourable Name deserves to be *stigmatized* with a very reproachful one; *low Cunning*, or, at best, *worldly Wisdom*; and that, too, frequently carried on by the most scandalous Vices. To prevent the Mischiefs arising from the false Notion of *Prudence*, I shall endeavour to settle it.

PRUDENCE and WISDOM are often used promiscuously, but WISDOM I consider as applied to the Choice of the *End* which we aim at in our Actions, and PRUDENCE as employed in the Choice and Use of *fit Means* for the accomplishing it. In which Sense of the Word a Man may be very PRUDENT, and yet a very *unwise* Person at the same Time; contriving with great Skill and Dexterity to carry on his Purposes, but acting very absurdly in having such Views. And this I

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conceive to be the Grand Error of Mankind; not that they act *imprudently*, or *improperly*, in the *Management* of their Schemes, so much as in the *Choice* of them; not that they use *unfit Means* to answer their Designs, but that their *Designs* are ill-judg'd. A Christian believes that after Death shall have let down the Curtain, and shut up the Scene of this Life, another will succeed, of infinite Concernment, because of infinite Duration. There cannot, then, be any Axiom in *Mathematics* more self-evident than that the *grand Point* of *Wisdom* in a *Christian* is, the Security of Happiness, and the highest Degree of Happiness in that State; and that the greatest Degree of PRUDENCE consists in the Use of the most *proper Means* of *securing* and *improving* this future Felicity. The *Worldling* may be very notable and sagacious in forming and executing Projects for the Acquisition of *Honour*, or *Wealth*, and yet be guilty of the most *stupid Folly* in mistaking his *main End*, his *chief Good*. If any plodding Man of Business, or smart Youth of Pleasure, should give himself an Air of Contempt and call this *dull Preaching*, I have as much Right and more Reason to dispise his childish Impertinence. For what is the Design of all his Schemes of *Ambition*, *Avarice*, or *Sensuality*, but *Happiness*? Now, if *Happiness* be our natural Desire and Aim, the *greatest* and *most lasting* Happiness deserves the largest Share of our Concern. The Man whose great Drift is the Acquisition of *Wealth* would think very meanly of any one's Understanding who should form a Scheme for getting a 100 l. a Year and make THAT his *grand Pursuit* when he might as easily, by turning the Bent of his Thoughts and the Course of his Application another

ther Way, acquire an immense Estate ; or if he should be tempted by the greatest Trifle to forfeit his Title to the largest Expectations. Is there such a Thing in Nature as *common Sense* and *Reason* ? If there be, I make my Appeal to them. Does not the *biggest Wisdom* consist in keeping the *most perfect* and *durable* Felicity constantly in View, and making all our Actions terminate *there* ? And is it not the greatest *Folly* and *Madness* to neglect the Consideration of Things of the *very last* Importance for the Sake of others comparatively of no Account at all ? To be anxious after Things of a short and uncertain Continuance, and unmindful of a *permanent, never-ending* State, upon which we are so soon to enter ? *Millions* of *Millions* are not so superior in *Number* to a *single Unit*, as *Eternity* is in *Duration* to the *longest Time*, or the Happiness of another Life in *degree* to this. When, therefore, I see poor Creatures, professing their Belief of *Futurity*, of Pleasures inconceivable, yet *wholly possess'd* by *worldly* Thoughts and Affections ; perhaps doing *little mean* Things, disgraceful to the Dignity of human Nature ; *villainous* Things that are a Reproach to common Morality ; *cruel* Things that ought to shock our natural Compassion ; when I see such monstrous Inconsistencies between *Principles* and *Practice*, I cannot help fancying myself in *Bedlam*, where unhappy *Lunatics* in Straw and Nastiness think themselves greater than the greatest Emperors, and wiser than *Solomon*. The Conduct of such Believers is as much beside the Dictates of *sober Reason* and *sound Sense*, as the rambling, incoherent Ravings of those distemper'd Persons.

Yours, &c.

A

A Letter occasion'd by a Friend's being in danger of an Apoplexy.

Mr. HOOKER,

IN the Intimacy of Friendship I lately read over, to a very ingenious Gentleman, the inclosed Reflections, and he made me promise to send them to you. If you *could* have the *Candour* without the *Affection* of a *Friend*, you might think as well of them as he did; but as you will read them with the unbiass'd Judgment of a *Stranger*, you will more probably make some private Use of them. They were written, some Time since, in the Form of a *Letter*, to a very intimate and worthy *Friend* on the Occasion of his being apprehensive of an *Apoplectick* Fit, and my having been formerly under the same melancholy Circumstances. The Similitude of our Case induc'd me to hope, I might be able to contribute towards the Peace of his Mind, and open to it a more comfortable Prospect than under such Oppression it is apt to form to its self. With this View only I wrote to him the Substance of what I am going to relate by way of *Narrative* of my Case, and of the Methods which I used in order to relieve my labouring dejected Mind.

Next to the Pain of a guilty Conscience, a State of *Melancholly* is the most grievous Condition of human Nature. It makes every thing about us look black and dismal, and is *almost* incapable of that Relief from *Reason* and *Religion* which they can administer to us under any other Affliction. The bodily Appetites are dead to all Enjoyment, and the Mind to all Comfort; the whole

whole Man lifeless and useless ; Attention to Business quite irksome ; all Amusements insipid ; Conversation disagreeable ; Retirement as uneasy ; Friendship without its Sweetness, and even Devotion without its Raptures. I speak feelingly because I speak experimentally. For four Months together I was under a Complaint that gave me Reason hourly to expect the fatal Stroke. Every Morning I thought that before Night I should have made my Bed in the Grave ; and every Night, that before Morning I should have waked in the eternal Regions of another World. The Dread of my Dissolution, the Distrust of my future Condition, natural to Persons under such Indispositions, the Desire of Life natural to us all, made it at first difficult to compose my tumultuous Thoughts, to still my Fears of Futurity, and to satisfy my Desires after a longer Continuance here. When I stood upon the Brink of *Eternity*, and, with the timorous Eye of *Nature*, look'd down the shocking Precipice into such a bottomless boundless Gulph, with what Horror did I tremble ! How were my bewilder'd Thoughts employ'd in forming some Notion of the State of that *endless* Life upon which I consider'd myself as just entering. A Man must be either a very great Blockhead, or a very good *Christian*, who can think of going into *Eternity* and not be under some Amazement and Terror ; and he must be strangely inconsiderate if he does not *often* think of what *must be*. If we be so eager in our Desires, so restless in our Pursuits, so anxious about our Success in *transitory* Concerns, our Sollicitude and Anxiety ought in Reason to increase with the infinitely superior Importance of an *endless Duration*. But, as I was thoroughly persuaded of
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the Truth of *Christianity*, by Degrees my Terrors abated, till the Thoughts of Death became not only tolerable, but pleasant to me. Instead of terrifying my self with this startling Question—What if I should go into a State of incessant *Misery* without the least Hopes of Abatement, or End!—I used to meditate on the Descriptions which the *New Testament* has given us of the future Happiness of sincere *Christians*; dwelling, particularly, upon St. *Paul's* rapturous Account of that State of Glory, till, like him, I grew desirous of my Departure.—Sometimes the Changes which the *Body* shall sustain, that it may become a fit Instrument of Pleasure to a glorified Spirit, was the agreeable Subject of my Thoughts. Tho' we shall not then see and hear in the same Manner that we do now, we shall certainly be able, some way or other, to perceive Objects; and with what infinite Variety of them may the Omnipotent Power of God have adorned our *celestial* Mansions, infinitely surpassing the most glorious Objects that this World, beautiful and wonderful as it is, affords! Thro' what new Worlds has my *Imagination* ranged! How has it labour'd to conceive their Number, their Beauty, their Grandeur! The Excellency, the Employment and Happiness of their Inhabitants!—Now we remove from Place to Place with Difficulty, and but slowly, but with what Ease and Celerity shall we be able to travel thro' the *upper Regions* when this Load of Earth shall be *spiritualiz'd*!—We are assured from *Scripture*, that among the Blessed Spirits in *Heaven* there will be the Harmony of *Musick*, as well as of *Love*; and if our present imperfect Organs be capable of receiving such exquisite Delight from the imperfect

fect Compositions and Performances of mortal Men, how sweet, how solemn, how elevated and rapturous must be the Strains of *Saints and Angels and just Men made perfect and immortal!* Knowledge is the proper Food of a rational Being; and if our present scanty Portion of it, attain'd with painful Attention, accompanied often with Uncertainty and Doubt, and conversant chiefly about Things comparatively trifling, be so delightful, what high Notions must we conceive of our future Knowledge, acquired without Trouble, certain and indisputable as to its Truths, and having for its Objects the inexhaustable Fountain of the Divine Perfections and the unsearchable Riches of God's Goodness in his Dispensations, especially in that amazing Instance of his Love, the *Redemption of Mankind!*—As sociable Creatures we are now pleas'd with the Conversation of agreeable Friends; but how much more engaging and improving must be the *Angelick Society*, between Beings so much more knowing and loving, conversing together without any Restraint or Distrust because without any selfish Designs upon one another, upon Subjects the most Noble and Delightful that can employ the Thoughts of an intelligent Creature!—Here our Nature leisurely ripens into Maturity, continues but a little while in its Perfection, then gradually sinks again into Infancy; but *there it shall flourish in immortal Youth and Strength*, all its powers incessantly employ'd with their utmost Vigour on their proper Objects.

By these kind of Reflections I used to reconcile myself to the Thoughts of *Death*, or, rather, entertain myself with it.

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But, these comfortable Meditations were frequently interrupted by short Intervals of *Distrust*. When I consider'd my many and great Imperfections, my many wilful Transgressions, the little Improvement that I had made in myself, and the little Good that I had done to others; this dashed my Hopes with fearful Apprehensions of my being unworthy to dwell in such glorious Habitations, to partake of such pure Enjoyments, to associate with such perfect Beings.—To remove these Disquietudes, I applied the Consideration of God's *Goodness* and the Delight which in his Holy Word he professes to take in Acts of *Mercy*. But, *Goodness* being always under the Restraint of *Wisdom*, I could never tell what *Degree* of *Mercy* it would be *wise* in God to shew me. This oblig'd me, for perfect Satisfaction, to have Recourse to the *stated Terms* of Acceptance in the *Christian Covenant*. HERE I found my *Judge*, a God of *Truth*, declaring, that no *sincere Christian*, however imperfect he may be, however sinful he may have been, shall be rejected, if he *repents*, and relies upon the *Merits* of *Christ's Death* for the Pardon of his Sins. This Consideration freed me again from all Doubts and Fears, fill'd my Soul with the most grateful Sentiments towards God, and the most indignant Admiration of the Stupidity of those who do not most thankfully accept of so gracious a Covenant.

My Fears being thus dissipated, a Reason for desiring a longer Life suggested itself from the Hopes of being able to make further Improvements in *Christian Perfection*; and of intitling myself to higher Degrees of future Felicity. But, this was soon answered by recollecting, that in so

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corrupt an Age there was at least an equal Probability of my growing *worse* instead of *better*.

There was now but one Thing wanting towards the Establishment of a perfect Tranquility. So great an Advantage have *present* and *visible* Things over *distant* and *invisible* ones, that, tho' I was possess'd with a full Persuasion of the superior Felicities of another World, and of my Title to them, thro' the infinite Merits of my Redeemer, yet still I sometimes found the Desire of *Life*, and of those Objects which Habits had made dear to me, so prevalent as to create some Uneasiness at the Thoughts of leaving them. I was the most affected by a tender Concern for some Friends whose Happiness I affectionately desired, and thought that I might be able to promote. That sweet-temper'd, good-natur'd Man, Archbishop Tillotson, says, "Whoever pretends to have a mighty Affection for any Thing, and yet pretends that he can contentedly bear the Loss of it, without any great Sense or Signification of Pain, does not talk like a Philosopher, but an Hypocrite; and under a grave Pretence of being a wise, is in Truth an ill-natur'd Man." But surely it is a great Instance of the Strength of our Passions, and of the Weakness of our Reason, that we are so much more affected with the Loss of our Friends when they die and leave *us*, than when we die and leave *them*; as if, when we are out at Sea, exposed to the Dangers Difficulties and Hardships attending Seafaring Men, we should be most grievously afflicted to see a dear Friend happily escaped from them all, making the desired Port, where he will securely enjoy the Fruits of all his Labour and Travel, but when we ourselves are

safely arriv'd we should look back with a comparatively cold Concern upon our Friends on the boisterous Element, who must endure a good deal of Fatigue and Uneasiness before they can follow us, and are always in some Danger of being lost. This Consideration touch'd me the most sensibly, as a *Christian*, and a *Man*; and I could only recommend them to the Grace of God for Strength and Comfort. But, while I consider'd them as continuing *Religious* and *Virtuous* they were no great Objects of any compassionate Regard because under the Protection of that Providence which never fails to take care of a good Man; if not to give Him Affluence, yet, what is much better, Contentment and a tolerable Passage to the Land of Promise, where we shall have a joyful Meeting, and part no more.

As to all the other Enjoyments of Life, I found it less difficult to resign them. For, what is *human Life*? Sir *William Temple* says, *it is only Dressing and Undressing*: And if we were obliged to spend the whole Day in putting on our Cloths, and the whole Night in pulling them off again, this ingenious Writer has given a true Account of the Matter. But how much more justly the divine Mrs. *Rowe* *! “What is this Life but a
 “ sorry tiresome Round, a Circle of repeated Vanities? Happiness has been never seen in it
 “ since Sin and Folly enter'd: All is empty Appearance, or vain Labour, or painful Vexation:” Sickness and Pain; Trouble in discharging the common Offices of our Stations, and Uneasiness arising from frequent Disappointments; Indignation and Grief at the Wickedness, Spleen
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* *Devout Exercises of the Heart in Meditation and Soliloquy*, published by Dr. Watts.

and Contempt at the Follies ; Commiseration of the Miseries of Mankind ; very little *real*, hardly any *unmix'd* Pleasure and Satisfaction.

There is in Human Nature an unaccountable Restlessness and Discontentedness of Mind that will create Uneasiness to itself, let our Condition be what it will. The greatest Excellence of Parts and the greatest Pre-eminence of Character are liable to the vexatious Tax of Envy and Detraction. The greatest Affluence cannot free us from Desires that will pall the Enjoyment of it. The greatest Blessing of Life, *Health*, will produce one of the greatest Curses, fretful *Vapours*. We are often out of Humour we know not why, disgusted at we know not what, weary of what we have, and desirous of something which we have not.

That cruel Something unpossess

Corrodes and leavens all the rest.

That something if we could obtain

Would soon create a future Pain.

Too high or too low a Situation are equally productive of Mischief to us. Ignorance is inconsistent with rational Happiness, and *in much Knowledge there is much Grief*. The Want of Experience exposes us to many Inconveniencies, and a thorough Knowledge of Mankind puts us out of Love with them. If our Senses be very exquisite, they are oftener offended, than gratified ; if defective, one half of us is half dead. We have either too many Spirits, or too few. When too many, they hurry us into Errors ; when too few, we lose the Relish of every thing. Our Passions are apt to be too strong for due Regulation

gulation, or too weak for true Enjoyment. We are either becalm'd, or in a Storm.

Upon the whole, if we could be absolutely certain that Death would put an End to our Existence this World would not be worth having. Nothing makes it a *Comfort*, but *Religion*, the firm Belief of a *Providence*, and a *future State*. It has been observ'd, that *Self-executions* grow more frequent, as *Infidelity* grows more prevalent. I am so far from wondering at it that I conclude, from there not being more Instances of That Kind, that, tho' *Scepticks* are very numerous, there are few DETERMINED *Infidels* upon *thorough Conviction*. They have some *Doubts* concerning *Futurity*, or Thousands would make their Escape out of Life; some in a Fit of *Resentment*, or *Chagreen*; others to rid themselves of a Load of *Poverty*, or *Pain*. Whether we suppose our present Existence to be the Effect of some other Being, or (absurd as the Notion is) of *Chance*, the same *Power*, or the same *Chance*, may continue our Existence after Death, and we may be capable of *higher Degrees* of Misery than we feel here. This Uncertainty, with its Effects upon their Resolution, is strongly express'd by *Shakespear* in the following Passage; which, possibly, not a tenth Part of your Readers have seen, or do remember; and fewer still have read with a due Attention to the exalted Sentiments of it.

————— To die, to sleep,
No more; and by a Sleep to say, we end
The Heart-ache and the thousand natural Shocks
That Flesh is Heir to; 'tis a Consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream; I, there's the Rub.
For

*For in That Sleep of Death what Dreams may
come,*

*When we have shuffled off this mortal Coil,
Must give us Pause; there's the Respect
That makes Calamity of so long Life:*

*For who would bear the Whips and Scorns of Time,
Th' Oppressor's Wrongs, the proud Man's Con-
tumely,*

*The Pangs of despis'd Love, the Law's Delay,
The Insolence of Office, and the Spurs*

*That patient Merit of th' Unworthy takes,
When as himself might his Quietus make*

*With a bare Bodkin? Who would Fardels bare
To groan and sweat under a weary Life?*

*But that the Dread of something after Death,
The undiscover'd Country, from whose Bourn
No Traveller returns, puzzles the Will*

*And makes us rather bear those Ills, we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.*

*Thus Conscience does make Cowards of us all,
And thus the healthful Face of Resolution*

Shews sicklied o'er with the pale cast of Thought.

But there is a State of *Uncertainty* still more disquieting than what the *Poet* has so nervously and movingly described. It is utterly impossible, in the Nature of Things, that any Man can be *absolutely certain* that there will be no *Future State*, and consequently an *Infidel*, if he has but common Sense, goes out of this World under great *Doubt* and *Uneasiness*. But, who can describe the Agonies of a *wicked Man*, after a long Course of Vice, upon a *Death-bed*, convinc'd of his Folly and Madness, persuaded of the Reality of an *Eternal State*, and under just Apprehensions that *Eternal Misery* may be his unhappy Lot! For,
tho'

tho' we be *certain* that *sincere Repentance* will always be accepted, yet such Persons can never be certain of the *Sincerity* of their Repentance, for want of some visible Fruit of it.

The Course of Thoughts which I have here given you, have been of very great Use to me, and perhaps they may be of some to others.

I am, Yours, &c.

N. B. *This Letter gave so much Satisfaction and Comfort to a Lady of Distinction, then under the same Circumstances, that she sent me her Thanks and an handsome Present.*

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A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE the
HOUSE of COMMONS,

A T

St. MARGARET's Church *Westminster*,

O N

Saturday MAY 29, 1742.

BEING THE

ANNIVERSARY of the RESTORA-
TION of KING CHARLES II.

Lunæ 31 Die Maii 1742.

ORDERED,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Doctor Webster, for the Sermon by him preached before this House on Saturday last at St. Margaret's, Westminster; and that he be desired to print the same; and that Mr. Carew, Mr. Gray, and Mr. Sydenham, do acquaint him therewith.

N. HARDINGE,

Cl^r Domⁱ Comⁱ
ANNIVERSARY of the RESTORATION of KING CHARLES II.

PSALM CXVIII. 23, 24.

*This is the LORD's doing and it is marvellous
in our Eyes.*

*This is the Day which the LORD hath made :
we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

THESE Words are so very applicable to our present Meeting that they are not only made Part of the Service for the Day, but are cited in the *Act of Parliament* which calls us together on this Occasion. — They are Part of a congratulatory Hymn on account of *David's* full and undisturbed Possession of the Throne of *Israel* and *Judah*.

And whether we consider the Circumstances of the King of *Israel* and the King of *England*, the *Manner* of their Establishment upon their Thrones, or the *Consequences* of it, there is, in all these Respects, a very great, and, I wish I could truly add, a perfect Similitude between them. — As to the *Condition* of the two Monarchs, they were, both, hunted like Partridges upon the Mountains; they were, both, driven for Shelter into the Woods and most obscure Corners of the Earth; they were, both, marvellously protected by the Divine Providence; they were, both, forced to take Refuge in foreign Countries, even among the Enemies of the *true Israel of God*; and, both, returned to their own Land, and to the Enjoyment of their Dominions; and how much more glorious would it be to the Memory of *our* restored Monarch, if the Parallel could be extended to the *Piety* and *Virtue* of the other
Royal

Royal Fugitive ! if he had returned to his Country with the same *religious* Gratitude to God's Goodness in protecting and restoring him, and with the same affectionate Zeal for the Honour of his Laws, and the Purity of his Worship ! How much more happy for his Country, if his whole Reign had been as successful and prosperous as that of *David* ! But let his Blemishes be treated with Tenderness for the Sake of his *Father's* truly *Christian* and truly *Royal* Virtues and Sufferings ; who was both the most shining Ornament, and the foulest Disgrace to this Nation. As our History will inform latest Posterity that at such a Time there sat upon the Throne of *England* a Prince who perfectly understood the Grounds and Principles of his Religion ; who had Sense and Divinity enough to have discharged, nay, and adorned, the first Post in the *Church* ; who was as zealous, as he was an able Advocate for it ; who lived a bright Example of its Precepts, of the Humility and Charity and other Virtues of a *private Christian*, as well as of the most resplendent and exalted Virtues of a *Sovereign* ; who, at last, died a *Martyr*, with as much Resignation and Courage as any *Christian* or *Hero* ever shewed, either in the *Field*, or on a *Scaffold* ; When they shall consider all the Perfections of this admirable Prince, they may apply to the Nation what the Queen of *Sheba* said of the People of *Israel* on account of King *Solomon* ; “ Happy were thy Men ; happy were those thy Servants that stood continually before thee, and that heard thy Wisdom : Blessed be the LORD thy God which delighted in thee to set thee on the Throne of these Kingdoms ; because the LORD loved them, therefore he made thee
“ King

“ King to do Justice and Judgment.” — But where shall we find a Parallel to match the Folly and Wickedness of those infatuated Rebels, who, as insensible of their own Felicity as they seemed to be of his Virtues, shamefully and cruelly condemned him as the worst of Criminals, and, with one of the best of Kings, destroyed the most excellent Constitution of the World! — Yet, in the midst of Judgment God has remember’d Mercy; and after the Nation had long groaned under the most oppressive Miseries, restored to the right Heir his Crown, and to the Nation its happy Establishment. For this wonderful Act of God’s gracious Favour we have been returning our joint Praises and Thanksgivings; and in order to preserve and improve our grateful Sense of our great Obligations to Providence, and to remind ourselves of the right Use that we ought to make of this blessed Event, I shall,

I. Take Notice of God’s Government of *States and Kingdoms*, and of the legible Characters of a *divine* Interposition in the *Restoration* of our *King* and Government. — *This is the LORD’s doing; this is the Day which the LORD hath made:* And it ought to appear marvellous in our Eyes, that we may see.

II. What great Reason we have to be glad and rejoice in it.

I. The first Reflection that naturally suggests itself to us on this Occasion, respects God’s Government of *States and Kingdoms*, and the legible Characters of a *divine* Interposition, which appear in the *Restoration* of our *King* and Government. Without a due Sense of these Things we can-

cannot, in a proper Manner, keep this joyful Fe-
stivity. Unless we look up to the Omnipotent,
though invisible Hand, which conducted and
aided the external Instruments of the *Restoration*,
let our Apprehension of the Blessing be ever so
clear and strong, God will lose the Glory of his
Power and Wisdom and Goodness, and *we* shall
be wanting in our pious Acknowledgments, and
lose all the religious Uses of a firm Belief, that
there is an over-ruling Power which *can* and *will*
protect us, if we seek and take care to merit his Pro-
tection and that all the Force of human Wisdom
and Power can never secure a wicked People from
the Divine Vengeance. To deny this Doctrine, is
to reproach the *Liturgy*, the *Laws*, and the *Legis-*
lature, with the weakest Folly, or the most infam-
ous Hypocrisy. The Service appointed for
the 30th of *January*, prays thus, “ We thy fin-
“ ful Creatures, here assembled before thee, do,
“ in the Behalf of all the People of this Land,
“ humbly confess, that they were the crying *Sins*
“ of the Nation which brought down this heavy
“ Judgment upon us. But, O gracious God;
“ when thou makest Inquisition for Blood, lay
“ not the Guilt of this innocent Blood to the
“ Charge of the People of this Land, nor let it
“ ever be required of us, or our Posterity.” And
the Service for this Day, as well as the Act, ap-
pointing the Use of it, in the strongest Terms
ascribes the *Restoration* to the over-ruling Hand
of *God*, and expressly acknowledges, that “ God
“ has, in all Ages, shewed forth his Power and
“ Mercy in the miraculous Deliverances of his
“ Church, and the Protection of righteous and
“ religious Kings and States, professing his holy
“ and eternal Truth.” — And this is no more
than

than what has been, and is still, the universal Opinion of all Ages and Nations; professing the Belief of a Deity: and the *Romans*, in particular, ascribed the great Success of their Arms to the particular Blessing of *Heaven* upon their *Piety* and *Virtue*; and in Times of Danger and Distress from ill Success all Nations constantly imputed it to the Anger of the *Deity*, whom they endeavoured to appease by the richest Sacrifices. The Doctrine, therefore, of such an *over-ruling Providence*, especially in respect to *KINGS* and *KINGDOMS*, is not, as some would insinuate, a *superstitious* Notion, or a Notion peculiar to *Christianity*, but an Opinion universally entertained, grounded upon the Belief of a *God*, and *inseparable* from it. For, as to any Purposes of *Religion* and *Society*, the Belief of a Being, who, like *Epicurus's* Gods, is only an *unconcerned Spectator* of his Creatures, is of no Signification at all; so that all such Notions are no better than *Infidel* ones, and their Patrons declared confess'd Enemies of their *Country*.---If we look into the *Bible*, *God's Declarations* are too express to be contradicted, and too awful to be unaffecting. He not only declares his *Sovereignty* over the whole World, but the *actual Exercise* of it; that the *Rise* and *Downfal* of Kingdoms, are the Effect of *his Power*; that *he* mustereth the Armies; that *he* sends them and gives them Success.

The *Instances* of his *national Judgments* and *Mercies* are but one continued Series of Conduct from the Beginning of Nations. A *wicked* People never failed of being *corrected*; and, if their Chastisement did not bring them to *Repentance*, when the Measure of their Iniquity was filled up, they were *utterly destroyed*; but a *religious* and *pious* Na-

Nation was as constantly the Object of God's *Favour* and *Protection*. No Nation ever suffered a *publick Visitation*, whose Sins did not deserve it; nor was ever any Nation, eminent for *Religion*, unrewarded with *publick Blessings* from God. Thus it ever *has* been, and thus it ever *will* be, because this Method of Procedure is founded upon the *Immutability* of God's Justice, Purity, and Holiness. *Vice* will always be equally odious to the Deity, and *Virtue* always equally acceptable to him; there will always be the *same Reason* why God should vindicate the *Authority* of his *Government*, and assert the *Honour* of his *Laws*, by taking *publick Notice* of *national Wickedness* and *national Virtue*. He himself has told us, that this is the Course of his Conduct, and given us the *Reason* of it; and as that Reason must always hold equally we may be assured that his Conduct will be always uniformly the same. He declares his *Judgments* to be sent for the *Punishment* of those Nations who did not acknowledge his Government of the World, who did not *seek* to him, and *trust* in him for his Assistance, but relied solely on their *own* Wisdom and Force, or who rendered themselves obnoxious to his Displeasure by their Wickedness; frequently giving a black Catalogue of those Vices for which he punished them; and, consequently, every Nation, under the like Circumstances of *Iniquity*, may be assured of the same Treatment. Whenever they were *penitent*, they never failed of God's *Mercy*; and we may with equal *Certainty* upon the same Principles conclude, that his *Blessing* shall never be wanting to a religious People. As he always acted after this Manner, he will always continue to do so from the same Motives, *his*
Nature

Nature and the Nature of *Wickedness* and *Virtue* being immutable *.

The *Manner* of God's interposing with *national Punishments*, and *national Blessings*, is not now so *extraordinary* and *miraculous*, as it was formerly under the *Jewish Dispensation*; neither is there the same *Occasion* for it. The *Jews* were *separated* from the rest of the World in order to preserve the Knowledge and Worship of the *true God*; and therefore these *miraculous* Interpositions, in Favour or Disfavour of *them*; either to subdue their Enemies, or to deliver them into their Hands, according as they kept to their Religion, or lapsed into *Idolatry*, this was a natural and effectual Means of awakening the Attention of the idolatrous Nations about them, and convincing them that the God of *Israel* was the only true God, the universal Lord of the whole Earth. But, as Mankind, at present, stand in no Need of any such *extraordinary* Means of Conviction, they are no longer afforded them, but Men are left to believe upon the Evidence of a *standing Revelation* sufficiently confirmed; and, having so much Reason from *sacred* and *profane* History, and from the *Attributes of God*, to be satisfied that his *true Religion and Worship* shall always be

* Whoever compares God's Declarations and the History of his Government with the present corrupt State of *Europe* and the Antichristian Conduct of Princes, must be convinced, that we have Reason to expect the several Chastisements, if not the total Ruin of most of the Governments, which, as usual, he will execute, by making them the Instruments of each other's Ruin. This is not the less, but the more likely to be true, because Men will not believe it, such obdurate Blindness being a sure Prognostick of these Distresses; and if we take a particular View of our own Condition in these Nations, the Prospect is very melancholly.

the Object of God's peculiar Care and Protection; and that the Denial of his *Authority*, and the Violation of his *Laws*, will always feel the Severity of his *Judgments*; we have reasonable Motives for *Piety*, for an awful Dread of his *Indignation*, and an humble *Trust* in his *Goodness*, though he does not rain down Fire from Heaven to consume us; though he does not divide the Sea, open the Rocks, send down Manna, or by an Angel strike 200,000 Men dead for our Deliverance: And we are not, *we* especially of *this* Nation are not without *Instances* of Deliverances, *almost* miraculous; so *very extraordinary*, that the Events cannot *reasonably* be accounted for in a *merely* human Way, and where there are obvious Reasons, drawn from undeniable Principles, to suppose a *Divine Interposition*.

If we go back to the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, it will afford us plain Marks of the *Divine* Assistance and Protection.----Though the *Reformation* was begun in *Henry* the Eighth's Time, it was interrupted in Queen *Mary's*, but happily, though with great Difficulty, established by Queen *Elizabeth*. If we consider the then defenceless State of the Nation, the Number of Enemies among *ourselves*, and an almost universal Combination of *Foreign* Powers against us, our Ruin seemed, in an *human* View, so probable, that when *Spain* fitted out their INVINCIBLE *Armada*, they sent it with as much Confidence of Success as if their Errand had not been to *conquer*, but to take *Possession*. For the compassing great Events God always makes Choice of the fittest Means, and by insensible Ways assists them in the Execution. Our then glorious Princess was raised up by *Providence*, and fitted, like *Cyrus* and

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Alexander, for carrying on the grandest Designs of GOD, respecting the *true Religion*, under seemingly insuperable Disadvantages, which her great Abilities, aided by the Power, and directed by the Wisdom of the ALMIGHTY, at last surmounted. Her Wisdom taught her that there was a Wisdom and Power superior to any Thing that is *human*, and to *Him* she gave the Honour of the Success. When her Enemies thought to mortify her by imputing their Defeat to *Providence*, she reckoned it *her* greatest Glory that she was under the *Divine Protection*; she triumphed in that Glory, and struck a *Medal* to make a publick Acknowledgment of it.

In the next Reign the Discovery of the *Gunpowder Plot* may be imputed, as it was then, to GOD, “*Inspiring* the King with a *Divine Spirit*” “to interpret some dark Phrases in the Letters,” “above and beyond all ordinary Construction.” This was the Language of those Times; this was the Legislature’s Opinion, and this is still the Opinion of all sober and serious Persons.-----And how easy is it for Him who made all the Faculties of our Minds imperceptibly to enlighten them? And how reasonable a Supposition is it to imagine, that the great Governor of the World *should* interpose in Events of such Importance to his own Honour, the Interest of his *true Religion*, and the Good of three Kingdoms? I might have added, of a great many more, whose Fate depended upon that of *England*. Instead of disputing with our MAKER the Glory of these Blessings, let us, who share in the happy Fruits of them, celebrate the Praises of our Benefactor, and endeavour, by our Thankfulness and Obedience, to render ourselves worthy of their Continuance.

The *Restoration* was in many Parts of it very wonderful ; but I would direct your Observation particularly to the King's *Escape* and *Preservation* after the Battle of *Worcester*, and to the State of the Nation at the very Time when the King was called home. In reading over the Narrative of his *Escape* it is difficult to say whether you feel most Pain from the many Dangers which appear unavoidable, or Pleasure to find the Hand of God leading the King safe through them. At the Conclusion the Historian (*Echard*, p. 696.) expresses himself thus: " Such were the Particulars of
 " the King's wonderful *Escape* from such Variety
 " of Dangers and Difficulties as cannot be paral-
 " lelled in History ; so that he seemed to be all
 " the Way guided and guarded by Angels from
 " Heaven. It must be amazing to all Posterity,
 " that among so many Persons of mean Condi-
 " tion, of so contrary Religions, among so many
 " Women, and other timorous People, who were
 " frightened at the very Name of *Death*, that
 " among so many broken and indigent Per-
 " sons, to whom a great Reward was so tempt-
 " ing, not a single Person offered to betray him." Let *Infidels*, if they can, account for this in a natural Way, agreeable to the Experience which we have of the usual Behaviour of Mankind under the like Circumstances.

And it is almost as wonderful, that he was not *assassinated*, or *poisoned* abroad ; or, indeed, that he was not *demanded* by the triumphant and dreaded *Usurper*, and delivered up by some of the foreign States. The *Usurper* was bold enough to dare to do any Thing, and they shewed themselves mean enough to submit to any Thing. As to the *Dutch*, it is no Wonder that a *Republic* should

should dislike and slight a *King*. It is true, they were under very great Obligations to this Nation. Queen *Elizabeth* supported them in their *Infancy* against the Tyranny of their *Spanish Masters*, and they have since received many Advantages from us; and, in *Gratitude*, the Crown of *England* might demand their utmost Assistance against its rebellious and tyrannical *Subjects*. But *Gratitude*, like other Virtues, is very seldom the Growth of a *political Soil*: *Self-Interest*, with a numerous Retinue of Succours, is the *natural Product* of it, and usually cultivated with much *Art*. For some Time they did not think it their *Interest* to countenance the banished, persecuted Prince; and therefore they were willing that he should seek for better Friends in some other Part of the World; till they saw that his *Restoration* was unavoidable, and, *then*, upon the same Motives that induced them before to be so very unneighbourly, they sent great Compliments to him at *Breda*, and afterwards paid him great Honours at the *Hague*, expressing their Joy in very high Terms.

The *French King* was not only a *Neighbour* under the Ties of *Charity*, but a *Brother King*, and a *near Relation*; to whose *Friendship* our distressed *Monarch* was justly intitled by the Claims of *Affinity*, as he was to his *Assistance* by the Laws of *Nature*. But with *Statesmen* NATURE and AFFINITY have often as little Force, as *Obligations*. Notwithstanding all these Considerations they were true to their standing Maxim of *Interest*. They received the *Usurper's* Ambassador with the greatest Solemnity, and engaged, by *Treaty*, to exclude out of their Dominions our King, with his Brothers, and all his Relations and Adherents; except the *Queen Mother* herself, who was both a
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Native and a *Daughter of France*. But, no Wonder that for Reasons of *State* they should banish him the *French Dominions*, when by fomenting our unnatural Disturbances they had contributed towards his Banishment from his *own Kingdoms*. *This*, you will think, was going great Lengths, but they were so intent upon their *political Views* as to forget all Kinds of *common Decency*; for, with an Eye to the advantageous *Treaty* (in which Way they have always been more successful than by their *Arms*) their *Embassador in England* not only paid most fulsome *Adulation* to a most *tyrannical Usurper*, but called his *Usurpation*, a *just Government* *. Thus forsaken of his *Neighbours*, of his *Friends*, of his *Relations*, the unfortunate Fugitive wandered up and down the *World*, with a Price set upon his Head, among *Strangers*, among *Enemies*, from whom the best Treatment that he could well expect, was, to receive *no Injury*.---And, yet, for several Years, the *Divine Providence* supported this forlorn Prince, and guarded him from all Dangers, till he placed him in Safety, in Prosperity, in Glory, upon the Throne of his Father, and blessed the Nation with their ancient *Government* and *Religion*. So truly may we apply the Words of my Text, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our Eyes*, &c.

But we shall not have a full Sense of the Share which *Providence* had in this marvellous Work, without attending to the *Time* and *Manner* of its Accomplishment. God brought the greatest Order out of the greatest Confusion, *ALMOST instantaneously*; as when he said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*. Indeed, the Nation had suffered

* *Ech.* 709.

ferred enough to make them desirous of a Change, and, as it appeared, the Nation in general *did* desire it. I am unwilling to give so painful a Description, as that of the Miseries which they had endured, though it might help to increase our Gratitude and our Joy; but I beg your Attention to a few Particulars, which shew the Hand of God in punishing Men in *Kind*. *Abab's* Blood, you must remember, was spilt in the very Place where Dogs licked the Blood of *Naboth* whom he had murdered. *Haman* was hanged on the same Gallows which he had unjustly prepared for *Mordecai*. *David's* Murder and Adultery were punished by his Son *Absalom's* lewd Incest. *Variety* of such Instances there are, not only in the *Bible*, but in *other* Histories; and a worthy Person (who, I hope, will *publish* it) has made such a large Collection of flagrant Facts as would *surprise* any one that has not thought of the Subject, and silence the most hardened Disbeliever of a *particular* Providence. Thus, in the present Case, one of the Crimes for which King *Charles* the First lost his Crown and his Head, was, his raising of Money without the Authority of *Parliament*, though the Practice of his Predecessors in the like Instances and in the Opinion of the twelve Judges naturally induced him to think it *legal*; and *Cromwell*, without any Authority at all, levied what Taxes he pleased in the most arbitrary Manner. Another *high Crime* was, a Breach of *Privilege*, in coming abruptly to the *House of Commons* and demanding some of the Members; and *Cromwell* came into the House with an *armed Force*, called the Members a *Pack* of *Fools* and *Knaves*, ordered the *Speaker* to quit the Chair, and bid them all go about their Business.

finess. They charged the King with *Superstition*; and God, in his *Vengeance*, gave them up to as wild *Enthusiasm*, as ever infected and infatuated a Set of Men. They went further in their Accusation, and imputed to him, as well as to Archbishop *Laud*, *Popish* Principles and Designs; and, as a just Judgment upon the Nation for the unjust Murder of those faithful Friends to the *Protestant* Religion, by the Banishment of the *Royal Family* into *Popish* Countries we came to be in *real* and *imminent* Danger of having *POPERY* established among us. When the King made Overtures of Peace, (and he often made such as were a greater Argument of his *Goodness* than of his *Prudence*) they pretended that they could not trust him, though he was a Person of the *strictest Veracity*; and they were afterwards so possessed as to believe *Cromwell's hypocritical Pretences*, whose great Talent and Engine of Government was, the *deepest Diffimulation*. In short, the grievous Oppressions of the Nation were in general apposite to the Crimes which the Sufferers had committed against the King; as almost the whole Body of *Independents*, *Anabaptists*, *Quakers*, and other *Sectaries*, whom he had set up, and who had set up him, confess in a mournful Address to King *Charles* the Second at *Brussels*, inviting him to come home and deliver them out of the Hands of the Oppressor.

But, though the Body of the People had Reason to be, and were very well disposed towards a *Restoration*, yet those in *Power* and *Authority* were as much averse to it. *Human* Wisdom could not foresee how they could be reconciled to it, or how it could be affected without their Consent. Nothing but that *infinite* Wisdom, which formed

formed a beautiful World out of a rude Chaos, could bring the sweetest Harmony out of the most jarring Interests. General *Monk*, the grand *human* Instrument by which God wrought our Deliverance, was like all other Instruments of *Providence* in the Accomplishments of such important Events, as well fitted, as *Man* could be, for the glorious Part which he had to act for God, his *King*, and his *Country*; but particularly in respect to his *Prudence* in concealing his Designs, and judging rightly of his Opportunities. He had all the impenetrable *Secrecy* of *Cromwell* himself without his *Hypocrisy*; and, in Justice and Gratitude to his Memory I speak it, no Man ever acted *such* a Part, under *such* Men, with so much Honour and Honesty. But, though I am fully convinced, myself, and have convinced many others *, that he always *intended* to *restore* the KING whenever an Opportunity should serve, yet I agree with the *noble* Historian, “ That no “ Man living, *of himself*, could have Wisdom “ enough to foresee, or Understanding enough “ to contrive it.”—And, therefore, not unto his *Instruments*, but unto the great Disposer of all Events, let us with the profoundest Reverence and the warmest Gratitude ascribe the Glory of it.

And while we are enumerating the extraordinary Blessings with which God has distinguished these Nations I should think it inexcusable if I omitted to mention the *Revolution*; as that is another equally memorable Instance of the Power and Wisdom and Goodness of God: And as it requires our Tribute of unfeigned Thanks and Praise, so, I hope, I am *willing* to hope, that our

* See Preface to Skinner's *Life of the General*.

our *latest* Posterity will see the gracious Ends of Providence answered by the Preservation of that admirable Constitution in *Church* and *State* which has been so wonderfully secured to us. If it be possible for a People to learn Wisdom from *Experience* we of this Nation may see that a *Commonwealth* and a *Popish Prince* are utterly inconsistent with our Safety and Prosperity; as the *Restoration* and the *Revolution* may be a Caution to future *Princes* and *Subjects* how they make Attempts upon the Liberties of *England*.

I have taken up thus much of your Time to very little Purpose, if you are not now in a Disposition to *rejoice and be glad*. Your Thoughts have been carried back to recollect the Calamities which in all human Probability we should have been bewailing, if God had not, as on this Day, restored, and afterwards as marvellously preserved to us our antient *Government* and *Religion*; and surely these Reflections are Matter of the most solid Comfort and Satisfaction. We should be very *unworthy* of such great Blessings if we were either insensible of them, or unaffected by them.---*Happy are the People that are in such a Case*; but the greatest Ingredient in our Happiness is this, that we have all along, in so distinguishing a Manner, *had the LORD for our GOD*. Instead of lying at the Mercy of a wild *Enthusiast*, or a *Popish* Bigot, to live under the mild and safe Temperature of a *limited Monarchy*, of a Monarchy limited in the *wisest Manner*; to have *Rights* and *Properties* preserved to us by Laws of our *own making*, instead of being governed by the arbitrary Will of *fallible Man*, liable to be intoxicated and made frantick by the Possession of absolute Power, executed by the Agency of a *military*

litary Force; to have the *Prerogative* of the *Crown* and the *Liberty* of the *Subject* secured by such an even, steady Balance, that neither Scale can preponderate without a great deal of Folly and Wickedness in that of the *People*, and as much Mismanagement in that of the *Prince*; but, above all, to exchange the *Fumes* of *Fanaticism* and the *Superstition* and *Idolatries* of *Poper*y for the pure and primitive Doctrines of *Christianity* and a reasonable Worship happily composed of *Decency* and *Simplicity*; these are singular Advantages in themselves so very valuable that we ought to be tenderly affected with Joy and Gratitude. But, when we consider these Advantages as secured and conveyed down to us by the visible Hand of God, our Joy must needs be the greater, as we have Reason to hope for the same Almighty Protection for their future Preservation. Unless we foolishly throw them away by our ill Conduct, or by our Wickedness provoke God to deprive us of them, may we not piously believe that we shall continue to be the Objects of his peculiar Care? as we shall be the Marks of his singular Vengeance, if we wantonly abuse the Riches of his Mercy and Loving-kindness. We have hitherto, like the *Jews* of old, been the favourite People of God, because, like *them*, God has made us his Instruments in the Preservation of the *true Religion*; and, while we continue to qualify ourselves to answer those gracious Designs of preserving and propagating the *Christian Religion* in its original Purity, the Gates of Hell shall never be able to prevail against us. This *Church* and *Nation* have long been its great Bulwark against its most dangerous Enemy, the *Church of Rome*. The Seed of the *Gospel* has here been watered

watered with the Blood of *Martyrs* and *Confessors*, with *noble*, with *royal Blood*. The Truth of our Religion and of its essential Doctrines have been as ably defended by sound Learning, as they have been piously adorned by a good Life. But, as God did not make Choice of the *Israelites* to be his peculiar People out of any *local* * Fondness for the *Soil* and *Climate* of *Judea*, or out of any *per-*

* Besides that *Christianity* has long been professed in greater Purity, and more ably defended in this, than in any other Nation; besides that we have been the great Support of the *Protestant Religion abroad*; we have, moreover, some good Grounds, from the Nature and Situation of our Country, to consider ourselves as the *fittest, natural Instruments* for Providence to make use of for the Preservation and Propagation of the true Religion; for which Reason, Mr. *Selden*, and Dr. *Hildrop* (in his Book upon the *Times of Antichrist*) observe, That so much is said of the *Isles of the Sea*, in the prophetic Writings. We are a Country blessed by Providence above all other Nations, and distinguished by an invaluable and peculiar Produce, by means of which we are capable of doing, by *natural Means* under God's *ordinary Providence*, what no other Nation is able to do without an *extraordinary Assistance*; I mean, of forcing the Balance of Power out of all other Hands. And, having no Interest to induce us to aim at *universal Monarchy*, we are more likely to propagate *Religion* and *Virtue*. The Balance of Power must be in the Hands of the *French*, or of *Us*. We know what Sort of Principles *they* propagate, in order to gain their Ends; and how the *Papists* have corrupted *Christianity*. If *we* hold the Balance, we have no political Designs upon our Neighbours which require *Infidelity* and *Irreligion* to carry them on. As, therefore God Almighty, in his Government of *States* and *Kingdoms*, had always a Respect to the Reception of *Christianity*, and the Establishment of *Christ's Kingdom*, we have Reason to suppose, that in his publick Dispensations, he has *since* had, and ever will have, the same *relative View* to the future Preservation and further Propagation of it. And, as his Wisdom has distinguished us from all other Nations, by *sitting* us, in a peculiar Manner, for these Purposes, this *Aptness*, as a Means naturally suited for such Ends, is a reasonable Ground upon which to build a *presumptive Argument*, that God intends to make that Use of us.

personal Partiality, but for Reasons respecting the Knowledge and Worship of the *true God*, and always blessed, or punished them, whenever they answered, or frustrated those Ends ; so neither has he distinguished *this Nation* by his singular Protection for any other Considerations than our having been a fit Instrument in the Hands of *Providence* to preserve his *true Religion* among us. If, therefore, the *Christian Religion* instead of being preserved and adorned be openly denied and insulted, its Ordinances neglected, its Precepts violated ; if, instead of *soliciting* the Divine Protection and Favour by frequent and fervent Prayer, we make a Mock of all *publick* and *private* Devotions ; if the most daring Sins which always brought down national Judgments grow prevalent among us ; can we expect to be *favour- ed* with singular *Blessings and Honours* ? Or can we expect to escape the common Fate of other wicked

us. Accordingly, Mr. Selden takes Notice, that “ the Sceptre was no sooner departed from *Judah*, but the true Religion *flew* through all other Nations, and *fixed* itself here, as its *Centre*, or Place appointed by Divine Providence for its Continuance.” And Dr. Hildrop, in the Book above-mentioned, is of Opinion, That in the dreadful Distress of Nations, at the coming of *Antichrist*, this Country will be the happy *Asylum* for the *Elect*, and the grand Instrument of God in bringing about those blessed Times of *Peace* and *Perfection* which are to succeed that short, but exceeding hot Persecution. This is a most comfortable Consideration under our present Dangers, as it gives us Hopes of Deliverance. A severe *Chastisement*, for our national Corruption, we must expect. This I am as certain of, as that *there is a God*, and that *his Word is true* ; but, I piously believe, that it will be only a grievous Correction for great Wickedness, but not a total Destruction for an irreclaimable Obduracy ; and, I hope all good *Christians*, by their importunate Addresses to God, and zealous Endeavour to forward a *Reformation*, will help to appease the Divine Wrath, and mitigate the Rigour of his avenging Justice.

wicked Nations? We can, at the best, only hope for some *severe Correction* that may be the means of our *Reformation*. But, if we go on from one Degree of Wickedness to another we shall grow *ripe for Vengeance*, and instead of such an extraordinary Deliverance as we have often experienced we shall be judicially delivered up as a publick Mark of God's *Indignation*. *Heaven and Earth may pass away*; every *created Being* is capable of *Alteration*; but *Self-existence* is *immutable*. If a *wicked People* will not be reclaimed by his *correcting Rod*, his *vindictive* one will *destroy* us. By his singular *Blessings* and *Deliverances* we seem intended by Providence for his *chosen Nation*; but his *Hand* is not *shortened*; he can raise up another Nation, though not *naturally* so fitted for it; make them the *Preservers* of his *true Religion*, and turn our *Captivity*, as he did that of the *Jews*, into a means of promoting it. Or, if we should be so *impolitick* as not only to weaken ourselves, but to throw our *Strength* into the *Hands* of those who are our *immutable*, and most formidable *Enemies*, there will be no *Occasion* for any other *Judgment* from *Heaven*, but only to leave us to fall a natural *Sacrifice* to our own *Folly* and *Madness* *. Or, if upon *political Views*, those *Vices* should ever be *encouraged* which have a *natural Tendency* to destroy a Nation, can we possibly expect that God should interpose and stop the

* I verily think, that History cannot produce such another Instance of *Folly* and *Madness*, as we are and have been for some Time guilty of. We are blessed with *Advantages*, as to our *Situation* and *Products*, beyond any Nation in the World. We might be the richest and most potent People under the Sun, if we were wise enough to improve those *Advantages*. Yet, instead of the greatest *Plenty*, we can hardly raise Money for the

the common Course of Causes and Effects only to hinder a foolish and wicked People from being over-run by a foreign Power, or from falling a Prey to domestick Disorders and Confusion? *Wickedness* will not only render us obnoxious to a *judicial Vistation*, but unavoidably destroy us of itself. *Voluptuousness* and *Luxury*, in particular, (at this Time prevailing to an *extravagant* Height, even to a Degree of *Madness*) ever were, and ever must be, the Ruin of a People. *Unbinking* or *designing* Men may from thence argue that there is a great Flow of *Wealth* among us; but those who have more Penetration know that such intemperate Cravings after expensive Pleasures are no more an Argument of *national Riches* than a voracious Appetite at the Close of a *Consumption* is a Symptom of Strength *. For the Truth

of the Exigencies of Government, and the Support of our Poor. Instead of giving *Laws* to all the World, other Nations do not care to enter into any *Alliance* with us. We have a powerful Neighbour, whose grand Point in View has been, for Centuries past, and will be, as long as we subsist, to ruin us; and yet we have not only treated them as *Friends*, but enriched them with our *Products* and *Money*, suffering them to manufacture the former, and drain us of the latter for the *Superfluities* of Life; nay, even in those Instances where we might be very well supplied at *Home*. We have some Money still in the Nation, and we are so busy in scrambling for it, that the clearest Representations cannot open our Eyes to see our Danger. Is it possible for any thing to look more like a *judicial Blindness* and *Infatuation*?

* The many Places built for Entertainment about this City, and the Number of Persons who resort to them, the Equipages and Dress of the Company, all this would induce a Stranger to imagine, that the Nation is in a most flourishing Condition; and whoever converses (which Persons in *high* Life seldom have, or desire to have, the Opportunity of doing) with the *trading* Part of our People, and hears an almost universal Complaint of the Want of Business and the Scarcity

of

of these Observations, I appeal to the Nature of Things and the History of the World. I may, without the least Degree of Rashness, challenge all Mankind to disprove them; and, in consequence of them, I may as safely pronounce those to be the *very worst* Enemies to their Country, who encourage *Irreligion* and *Immorality*; and those to be its best *Friends*, who, by vindicating the Truth and Honour of *Religion*, by an holy and good Life, and by their ardent Addresses to God, endeavour to bring down his Blessing upon us, and encourage the Practice of those Virtues which are both acceptable to *Him*, and have a *natural Tendency* to promote our Happiness.

of Money, would wonder whence should arise such an Appearance of *Prosperity*. But, this is no *Mystery* to considering People. While Persons of *Fashion* can raise any Money at all, or get Credit for Dress and Equipage, they will enjoy their Pleasure without attending to *distant Wants*. As it is natural for *Inferiors* to have the same Appetite towards *sensual* Enjoyments, and an Inclination to imitate their Betters, and to be in their Company, *Trades-people* will be as forward to strain their Purse and their Credit, for the sake of appearing among them, and sharing with them in their *Delicacies* of Life. But what infinite ill Consequences must these Things produce! *Extravagance* will beget *Necessities*, and *Necessities* will beget indirect Means of supplying them; in *private* Life, *Injustice* and *Fraud*; in *publick* Affairs, *Dependency* and *Corruption*. So many agreeable Objects and such enchanting Sounds daily soliciting their Senses will inflame all the irregular Passions, create a perpetual Thirst after Pleasure, an Impatience of Confinement and Business; dissipate sober and serious Thoughts, which are as necessary to the *civil* Offices of Life, as to a true *religious* Frame of Mind; enervate the manly Genius of our Country, and every way disqualify the Members of it for a due Discharge of their several Employments in it. ——— And I esteem it none of the least of the many ill Consequences attending these grand and expensive Amusements, that they may mislead our Governours into a false and dangerous Mistake concerning our Condition.

piness. This is the right Way of being faithful Subjects, and true *Patriots*.

And without this habitual Sense and Practice of *Religion* there can be no such Thing as a steady and uniform *Integrity*. Take away *Religion* and you leave no Motive that can regularly and constantly induce every Member of the Community to consult the Good of the *Whole* and of one another. In *some* Cases it would be the *real* Interest of particular Persons to act in Opposition to the Interest of their *Country*, or a *Fellow Member* of it; and in all such Cases he would as *necessarily* pursue his own Happiness as a Stone falls to the Ground by the Laws of *Gravitation*. And if we consider how often, through Want of Thought or Judgment, or through the Impetuosity and Irregularity of their Passions, Men may make a wrong Estimate of their solid and lasting Interest, they would frequently be tempted to sacrifice a more considerable, if *remote*, Point to some *present* Advantage. Tho' there lies, perhaps, but a very small Space between them yet the nearest Object strikes so strongly upon their Attention that the more distant one is not seen at all, or not in its true Magnitude; by which means (as History informs us) Men of Sense may be led into Measures that in a little Time would be destructive, not only to the *Community*, but to their own *Families* and *themselves*.* Upon

this
 * Though this may sometimes be the Case, yet generally they see the fatal Tendency of their Schemes, and go on in hopes that the *Publick* will be able to live out *their* Time, though in a weak and sickly Condition. Men whose Minds are in a natural State of *Sensibility*, can hardly conceive the Possibility of losing all Humanity towards their Fellow Subjects, Kindness for their Friends, and Affection for their Children

this Bottom, of *Infidelity*, or *Irreligion*, can stand nothing but a *detached* Scheme of *personal Conveniency*; from whence can flow nothing but *mutual Distrust*, *Deceit*, and *universal Ruin*. But, if a Society firmly believes a *Providence* and a *future State*, HERE is an *uniform* Principle that secures the Good of the *Whole*, by making it, in the final Issue of Things, the *real* Interest of every *Individual* to forego any Advantage, or suffer any Inconveniency for the Sake of promoting the *publick Good*, because he is sure that all such Losses will be amply made up to him by his future Felicity, and the greatest *indirect* Advantages more than balanced by an *After-reckoning*. Besides that these *religious Truths* by regulating the disorderly Passions will put his Mind into a Capacity of judging more truly of his Interest, upon the *Whole*, even with regard to *temporal* Advantages. Indeed, it often happens that those who make great Pretences to *Religion* are

artful
children and Relations; how they can be unmoved at the Thoughts of intailing Misery upon so many Millions, upon Ages yet unborn, only for the Sake of acquiring Things of no Significancy towards *rational* Happiness; *Honours*, that are quite foreign to our Nature; *Affluence*, that is always superfluous, often injurious, sometimes fatal; *Grandeur*, that is not only empty, but burthensome to a truly wise Man, whose Happiness consists principally in having the Command of his own Time, and knowing how to employ it to the Improvement of his Mind; in acquiring the Government of himself, and not in having others subject to his Will. But, those who have seen and observed the Conduct of Mankind, must be convinced that human Nature, *long hackney'd* (as *Shakespeare* says) *in the Ways of Men*, grows blind to its own true Felicity, and dead to all Tenderness towards others. If any such should chance to look into these Papers I only desire them to consider that their *selfish* Scheme, calculated, as it is, for a very short Time, will yet most probably operate too quick for their *own* Safety.

artful *Hypocrites*; and the more dextrous an *Hypocrite* is in acting his Part the more Mischief he is capable of doing by imposing upon the World. A Man is the better fitted for a Minister of *Darkness* by his being able to appear in the Form of an *Angel of Light*. But, though we may be mistaken in Men if they wear a *Mask*, it is *unpardonable* Folly to be mistaken in those who pull it off. If a Man *avows*, or shews by his *Behaviour*, that he has not a sincere affecting Sense of *Religion*, whatever his *present* Intention may be as to *some* Points it is impossible to have any well-grounded Security for his *constant* and *future* Behaviour because he has no *invariable* Principle of Action. *Virtue* and *Honour* are, with some People, very favourite Words, but, separate from *Religion*, they are but *mere Words*, *empty Sounds*, of no Signification towards restraining the Passions; nothing but *Religion* can do *That*: neither can a true Sense of *Religion* be preserved without *religious Worship*, which is now looked upon as a Thing *below* the Regard of a Person of *Fashion*.

I could with great Pleasure enlarge upon this seasonable Topic and the Necessity of inculcating it; but I dare not presume to detain you any longer. May GOD ALMIGHTY'S Grace give a Blessing and Efficacy to what I have delivered!

To Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c,

An Essay on LIBERTY.

— *Nunquam Libertas gratior extat*
Quam sub Rege pio —

Mr. HOOKER,

A Passage in your last Paper threw me into some Rectections upon the Subject of *Liberty*, or *Freedom*. A very favourite Subject. A Name that has something intoxicating in the Sound of it, especially to an *English* Ear. But a great many of her most passionate Admirers understand nothing of her *but* her Name; nothing of her *true Nature*, nothing of her *real Perfections*; but are in love with Blemishes, superinduced by their own blind Desires; which, like Patches upon a fine Face, serve only to spoil, or hide genuine Beauties.

I am going to write, for your Use (if you approve of them) my Notions of *true Liberty*, and to correct what I apprehend to be great Errors in the common Conceptions about it. *Liberty*, then, cannot consist in a *Freedom* from all manner of *Restraint*, from all *Law*, or *Rule* of Action. The supreme Being himself has a *Rule* of Action, and is under *Restraint*. The *Nature of Things* is his Rule, and his Perfections are his Restraint; which is commonly called a *moral Necessity*. He cannot *but* act agreeably to his Nature. The *Nature* of every Being, with its *Relation* to other Beings, is a proper Rule of Action to that Being; and *true Liberty* consists in a Power of acting *properly*, or *agreeably* to our *Natures*. A Liberty (if you will call it so) to act *unnaturally*, in Oppo-
sition

sition to the *Relation* and *Fitness* of Things, can be no desirable Privilege. It is the Prerogative, the supreme Perfection and Happiness of the Divine Nature, to be incapable of acting inconsistently with the highest Wisdom.

But let us bring this Notion down from the *Deity* to his *Creatures*. Though they have not the same *Rule of Action* because they have not the same *Nature* and *Relation* to other Beings, yet still their *Nature* is their *Rule*. While they act agreeably to their *Nature* they act *freely*. Whatever occasions them to deviate from that Rule, whether it be an outward Force, or an inward Impulse, is an Incroachment upon *Liberty*. A *Horse* has only his *Senses* to gratify; and they generally are a proper Direction to their true Gratification. But if he were turned into a most beautiful and inviting Pasture full of Holes covered over with the Grass, nobody would imagine the poor Creature to be the more *free* for being let loose to tumble into one of the Holes and break his Legs; or the less free for being *restrain'd* from following his own Inclinations, and led safely into a better Field. Man is a *reasonable* Creature, and while he has the Liberty of acting agreeably to *Reason* he has *true Freedom*. He has *Senses*, as well as the *Horse*; and, like him too, Part of his present Happiness must consist in the *Gratification* of them. But, as *Reason* is to direct him in the Enjoyment of his sensual Happiness, whenever he follows their blind Impulse without consulting the *directive* Part of his Nature the *Man* is become a *Slave*, and the *inferior* Part has the Dominion over the *superior*. Such a Power of acting cannot be the *true Freedom* of a *rational* Agent, and a *Restraint* from
 acting

acting *irrationally* can never be a Breach of *human Liberty*. The *Libertine* is in the Condition of the ignorant Horse in the Field, pursuing the blind Impulse of his Passions, which lead him into great Mischiefs; and whoever restrains him either by the Influence of good Advice, or by Dint of Force, does not *enslave* him, but *frees* him from the Dominion and Tyranny of his destructive Appetites. The *virtuous* Man only enjoys true Freedom; and therefore it is that our *Liturgy* calls the *Service of God perfect Freedom*.

From this Notion of *Liberty* (which I conceive to be a true one) it appears that a Power of *making our own Laws* cannot be essential to *true Liberty*, as such. It is *our* Boast that an *Englishman* gives his Consent, by his Representatives, to all the Laws by which, as a Subject, he is govern'd. But this does not enter into the *Nature* and *Essence* of *true rational Freedom*; for, whether we were, or were not consulted in the making of a Law, if that Law requir'd of us nothing but what was *suitable to our Nature* and *agreeable to the Relation of Things*, nothing but what was in itself *right* and *fit*, the Nature and Consequences of the Rule will be the same when prescribed to us by another as when we observe it of ourselves. While we are directed or commanded to do nothing but what is becoming us and proper for us to do, we have the *Liberty* of acting *rationally*, the only Liberty which a *rational Creature* ought to desire. If all *Direction* or *Prescription* necessarily destroy'd *human Liberty* Subjection to the *Will of God* would be inconsistent with it, but we have the more of *rational Freedom* for being directed by *unerring Reason*.

And

And as *Subjection*, as such, does not necessarily destroy all *Freedom*, so neither are we the *less* free for being subject to *absolute Power*. As great a Paradox as this may seem it is a certain Truth; for, otherwise, we are necessarily *Slaves* because *subject* to the *Will of God*, which is the *most absolute Power* that can be conceived. But, surely, no Man in his Senses will say that *Subjection* to the Will of Infinite Goodness directed by infinite Wisdom and supported by Infinite Power is *Slavery*. This is the *truest Freedom* that any Creature can enjoy; that any Creature, conscious of its own Happiness and Security, can desire. Properly speaking, *all Power* must be *absolute*. When it ceases to be *absolute* it ceases to exist; and, therefore, to affirm that *Subjection* to *absolute Power* is inconsistent with *Liberty* is the same as to say, that *all Subjection*, as such, is *Slavery*. The Difference between one Form of Government and another does not consist in their different *Degrees* of Power, but in the different Disposition of it. *All Governments* must be *absolute*; but in some this *absolute Power* is lodged in *one Person* only, but in others it is divided between several Persons, in such a Manner as to make them Checks upon one another, the *whole Power* still continuing *absolute*. In a *limited Monarchy* the *Prerogative* of the Crown, as far as it goes, is *absolute*. The Power of *enacting* Laws agreed to by Parliament is *absolute*. His Majesty has an *absolute Power* to enact, or not to enact; otherwise, it would be no Power at all. The Power of *Parliament* to refuse, or give Consent to any Thing which is offered to them in order to be *enacted* by the *King*, is as *absolute* as the *King's Power* of refusing to enact what has pass'd the *Parliament*.

It is the same under an *Aristocracy*, or *Commonwealth*; and I have often wonder'd why so many People, who stand no Chance at all for any Share of the Power, should be so fond of this last Form of Government, under which the Laws are generally stricter upon the *Governed*, and executed with more Rigour, than under a *limited Monarchy*. The *Subjects* of a *Commonwealth* have usually less of what is commonly call'd *Liberty* than any other Subjects.

But, if the Notion concerning *Freedom* which I have advanced be true, it may be objected, that an *Englishman* has no more *Freedom* than the Subjects of a *despotick* Prince enjoy, so long as he governs them by the same *wise* and *equitable* Laws to which *we* are subject; since *Slavery*, as has been shewn, does not consist in being *subject* to the *Will* of another, or to the Will of an *absolute* Prince, but in being *restrain'd* from the *Liberty* of acting *rationally* and *properly*; which *Liberty*, WHILE continued to any People, though by the *arbitrary* Will of another, makes them *so long FREE*; as free as if they were under no Subjection at all. But, then, this *Liberty* is seldom granted to Subjects under *absolute Governments*, neither can they be so *safe* in the Enjoyment of it. *We* have certainly *more* of what is properly call'd *Liberty* than any other Subjects (besides the Subjects of *Heaven*) and it is better *secured* to us; for which Reason we owe infinite Thanks to *God's* good Providence for casting our Lot in so fair a Ground, for the Happiness of being born under so desirable a Government, where we cannot be *ruin'd* and *enslav'd* without our *own* Consent. Could we find any *King* like the *King of Kings*, of unerring Wisdom, and unlimited Goodness

ness, we should act the wisest Part in desiring to resign ourselves into his absolute Disposal; and we should enjoy the *truest Freedom* while he directed our Actions. But, alas! without any Affront to *Majesty*, without derogating from the Character of the best of *mere Men*, we may affirm of *human Nature*, that it is liable to *Error* and *Infirmity*, mutable in its Sentiments and Dispositions; of *human Power*, that it has been found by long Experience to have an unhappy Tendency towards blinding the Understanding of the wisest, and corrupting the Hearts of the best of Princes; of *most* absolute Princes, that they have been corrupted so far as to be guilty of many Acts of *Tyranny*; of *all*, that they have been guilty of some unwarrantable Exercises of their Power: For which Reasons I congratulate my Fellow Subjects on the Felicity of not being *Turks*, under the Dominion of *Ignorance* and *Tyranny*; nor even *Russians*, though governed by so wise and gracious a Sovereign; but *Englishmen*, who live under the Light of the *Gospel*; whose Lives, Liberties, and Estates are less subject to the Mistakes of fallible, or the Humour of changeable Mortality; not only insur'd to them by the Justice of their Sovereign, but guarded by the same Laws which secure to *him* his Throne and Prerogative.

A Reflection upon the insinuating Quality of Power and the general Abuse of it should cool Men's Lust after it, and make them jealous of themselves in the Exercise of it. No wise Man would be willing to lie at the Mercy of the *best*, and a *good* Man would not desire to have any one lie at *his*. It is as natural for the one to distrust his own Use of Power, as for the other to covet the

the Possession of it. There can be but one just Reason assigned for the Desire of it, and that is a Reason which very seldom, I doubt, influences the Ambitious; I mean, the Opportunity of *doing Good*, and communicating Happiness. Every other Motive proceeds from Pride, and leads to Tyranny and Cruelty. If I see a Man fond of Direction and Command I am pretty certain that as soon as he gets into Power he will be arbitrary, and impatient of the least Opposition. The more generous Minds, who take Pleasure in the Freedom and Happiness of their Fellow-Creatures of the same Nature, chuse to converse with them upon the more agreeable Terms of *Equality*, and are unwilling to have any Occasion of shewing their Advantage and Superiority over them. One of the most shining Parts of *Augustus's* Character, and the truest Proof of his Greatness of Mind, was, his Clemency and his Humility in stooping down from the Heighth of his Throne to the Level of the worthy Men of his Court, that *he* might the more easily enjoy the Satisfaction of their Acquaintance, and *they* not be incommoded by the Incumbrance of his Dignity. The little-minded Man takes a Pleasure in looking down upon an Inferior, places Happiness in keeping him at a Distance, and in the *bare Exercise* of his Authority, without any Regard to its beneficial Effects upon those who are the Subjects of it.

Yours, &c.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D ON THE

F A S T - D A Y.

November 10, 1742.

A T

W A R E in H E R T F O R D S H I R E.

A
SERMON

PREACHED ON THE

FAST-DAY.

November 10, 1742.

AT

WARE in HERTFORDSHIRE.

HOSEA VIII. 3.

*Israel hath cast off the Thing that is Good,
the Enemy shall pursue him.*

BY *the Thing that is Good* the Prophet means the *true Worship* of God; and, as a Punishment upon them for their Impiety in departing from it, he tells them that the *Enemy*, (meaning the *King of Assyria*) should pursue them and make a Prey of them.

The *Israelites* were the peculiar People of God, separated from the rest of the World by an express Covenant between God and them, wherein were mutual Stipulations. God, on his Part, promised to take them under his more immediate Protection, and to grant them all Kinds of temporal Felicity. The People engaged to acknowledge him as the only true God, to worship *him* only, and to observe the Laws contained in the Covenant. But, together with the Promise of Blessings to their Obedience there was annexed a most dreadful Denunciation of Vengeance in case of Idolatry and Disobedience. The History of this People is a Proof of God's Veracity; of the certain Performance of his Promises, and as certain an Execution of his Menaces. While they continued faithful they were always protected and blessed; whenever they revolted they were as constantly scourged; and at last, when the Measure of their Iniquities was full, when they were ripe for Vengeance, they were totally destroyed.

But

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But God is not the God of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*. He is the universal King of the whole World, to whom all Mankind, by the immutable Law of Creation, owe Obedience; and as he is the Universal Governor he will not fail to *manifest* his Dominion, and preserve the Honour of his Authority, by some publick Acts of his Power. As *rational* Creatures we are bound to the Observance of such *moral* Precepts as are the Result of our Natures. As Persons who live under the Light of an *external Revelation* those natural Laws are enjoined by a *positive* Command, together with an Addition of particular Doctrines and Duties respecting the Nature and Worship of God: And, though the Sanctions of the *Christian* Covenant be principally *future* Rewards and Punishments, yet from God's moral Attributes, from his own Declarations, and from the History of his Dispensations recorded in the Bible, we may reasonably infer that national Wickedness and a casting off the *Christian* Doctrines and Worship will be punished, in this World as well as the next, by some national Visitation, though not so constantly and regularly as under the *Jewish* Dispensation, which was guarded in a particular Manner by *Temporal* Sanctions. Upon this Belief it is that we are called together by publick Authority; and I hope it is upon the same sincere Conviction, and not merely in Compliance with a civil Intjunction, that we are here assembled, in order to acknowledge the sinful State of this Nation and the Addition that we have made to the Stock of national Wickedness by our own personal Sins; to humble ourselves before God for them; to implore his Pardon, and to deprecate those Judgments

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ments which we have great Reason to dread, because we so well deserve them; and to supplicate that Divine Assistance without which the greatest human Wisdom cannot promise it self any Success from its Counsels, and the greatest human Force may prove mere Weakness and Impotency.

That we may in some measure answer the pious Intention of this solemn Meeting I shall,

First, Observe to you, that publick Calamities are inflicted upon Communities by the Hand of God, either for their Correction and Reformation, or for their final Destruction.

Secondly, I shall inform you, from the Authority of God's own Word, for what *Sorts* of Wickedness He, in the constant Course of his Providence, has usually punished Nations with temporal Calamities; in order,

Thirdly, To enquire into the Condition of our own Country, that we may judge what Reason we have to apprehend that we shall feel the vindictive Hand of the supreme Being for our many and crying Sins. After which, I shall,

Fourthly, Offer you my Sentiments very honestly and plainly concerning our Duty in our several Stations for averting God's Indignation, or mitigating the Severity of it.

First, I must remind you that publick Calamities are inflicted by the Hand of God, either for the Correction and Reformation, or for the final Destruction of a wicked People.

It is perfectly agreeable to our natural Conceptions of the Supreme Being to suppose that he does concern himself in the Affairs of his
Crea-

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Creatures ; and we should entertain very unworthy Thoughts of his Attributes if we did not believe it. It was owing to a false and low Opinion of the Divine Nature that the *Epicureans* imagined God to be an inactive Being. For, had they considered how easy it is for *Omniscience* to attend to all the Actions and Thoughts of all his Creatures at the same Time, and how easy it is for *Omnipotence* to rule and direct them all, they could not have judged a *Providence* to be any Interruption to the *Happiness* of God : And if they had conceived just Notions of the Divine *Goodness* they would not have thought it below his *Dignity*, but perfectly agreeable to his transcendant Excellency, to govern Beings to whom it was not below him to give Existence. And if God governs the World he will as certainly *discover* a Providence to his Creatures, as he has manifested himself to be the *Creator* of the World. And as he is a Being of infinite Justice and Holiness, who cannot avoid having a natural Hatred of Vice and Love of Virtue, he will countenance the one, and discountenance the other, in such a solemn and publick Manner as may vindicate his Justice and Holiness in this World, as well as in the next. Though at the Day of Judgment only will be the final Retribution, when every one shall receive his Reward or Punishment exactly proportionable to his Works ; yet if he shews that he *does* interpose in the Government of us he must shew that he is a *righteous* Governour, by giving *some* Testimonies of his Love of good Men, and his Dislike of wicked Men. Besides, as *Afflictions* are a natural Means of correcting and reforming us we may from thence conclude that infinite Wisdom will not neglect

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neglect to make use of Instruments so well adapted to the Purposes of Improvement. All this is perfectly agreeable to our natural Apprehensions of God.

But the Doctrine of a Providence, and of God's sending *Afflictions* upon *private* Persons and *publick* Communities, these Points are established in the *Bible* beyond Contradiction, with such as believe the Truth of it. Providence interposes much more particularly, even as to *private* Persons, than most of us imagine, frequently making our Vices the Means of correcting and punishing each other, without destroying our *Free-Agency*; and in the *Scriptures* are recorded many Instances of God's punishing particular Sins by being, *himself*, the more immediate and open Executioner of his Vengeance *. But I am at present only concerned with *publick* Calamities. However, I must observe, that if God has so often visited, and does still visit *particular* Persons, either in Mercy to reclaim them, or in order to make them Examples of his Indignation, the Honour of his Authority and Laws seems to be much more concerned in the Chastisement and Punishment of *Societies* and *Communities*. And, accordingly all the World have been of Opinion that God does punish Nations in their publick Capacity, and that national Calamities are the Effects of his special Providence; not by permitting Things to

* I cannot help taking this Opportunity of recommending two Books upon Providence. The First is a Proof of a *particular* Providence from Scripture, in Answer to Mr. Chubb, by Mr. Jackson. The other is the Great Dean Sherlock's Piece upon Providence; which, in my Judgment, is one of the best and noblest Books that ever was written by a mere Man, and worthy of any one's Perusal, let his Knowledge be ever so extensive.

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take their ordinary Course, but by directing them by an over-ruling Power ; in consequence of which Opinion in Times of national Distress they have constantly had Recourse to Sacrifices in order to appease the Divine Wrath.

But let us hear the Declarations of God himself. The Prophet *Isaiab*, says, Ch. xxiv. 1. *Behold, the Lord maketh the Earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the Inhabitants of the Earth.* Again, Ch. xlv. 7. *I make Peace and create Evil. I the Lord do all these Things.* To the same Purpose says *Amos*, Ch. iii. 6. *Shall there be Evil in a City and the Lord hath not done it?* And if from general Declarations, plain and full as Words can express them, we turn to all the Instances of national and publick Calamities recorded in the Bible, they are expressly ascribed to the Interposal of Omnipotence. It was God that brought the *Flood* upon the World. It was God that rained down Fire and Brimstone from Heaven upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* and the Cities about them. It was God that inflicted so many Plagues upon *Egypt*; that overthrew *Pharaoh* and his Army in the *Red-Sea*; that destroyed so many Nations by the Hands of the *Israelites*. He says, that it was he who raised up so many Enemies to the *Jews*; who gave them up to the Sword; who sent them into Captivity; who visited them with Pestilence, with Famine, with Drought, and other such national Evils; which are in Scripture called God's *Host*, and his *Army*. When the Prophets give us an Account of the Destruction of *Ninevy*, of *Babylon*, and other Cities, God himself is said to be the Author of it. Various are the Ways by which God brings about these angry Purposes.

He

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He has all the Elements, all Nature at his Command, and without altering their Laws he can employ them in his Service. He has all the secret Inclinations and Affections of human Nature under his Inspection and Controul, and without altering the Man can alter his Purposes and direct his Passions; as we may Turn the Course of a River without changing the Properties of the Water. He stirs up one ambitious Nation to punish another. He does not make That King or People *ambitious*, but serves himself upon their ambitious Inclinations, by directing where they shall operate; and facilitating their Success by an invisible Assistance: So that all such Events are as properly produced by God, and are as much his doing, as if he did them without the Mediation of second Causes. This I apprehend to be the common Method by which God has governed the World. But sometimes he has interposed in a more absolute Way; not by *directing*, but *over-ruling* second Causes, as well as acting without them: As also, with regard to Men's Passions and Purposes, he has sometimes suggested Designs, and at other Times forceably hindered Designs from being put in Execution. Only this one Observation must constantly be borne in Mind, that God never so far over-rules Free-Agency as to force any Man to have wicked Inclinations.

Secondly, Having shewn, by undeniable Testimonies from *Scripture* and by Arguments drawn from the *moral Attributes* of the divine Nature, that God has always visited, and will always visit wicked Nations with publick Calamities, either for their Reformation or Destruction; our next Enquiry must be into the Account which the

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Scriptures have given us of the *Sorts* of Sins for which he has visited Nations. I shall trace this Matter up to the first publick Vengeance that God took on Mankind, by causing a general *Inundation* that swept away Man and Beast and every living Thing that was upon the Earth, except those few which he preserved in the Ark. And we have this Account of the *Reason* why God took such a severe Course with the old World. *And God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only Evil continually, and it repented the Lord that he had made Man.* From whence it appears, that a general *Corruption* of Mind and Manners was the *Occasion* of the Flood.

The same Reason is assigned for the Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*. *And the Lord said, because the Cry* (meaning by that Expression, that the Heinousness of their Sins called aloud for Vengeance) *is very great, and because their Sin is very grievous, I will go down and enquire.* This Account agrees exactly with the former, in representing *Vice and Wickedness in general* as the Reason of their Destruction.

Pharaoh and his People were destroyed for their *Cruelties* to the Children of *Israel*, as *Babylon* afterwards met with the same Fate for that Reason in particular, though their other grievous Abominations conspired to make them fit Objects of God's Wrath. The Guilt of the *Egyptians* was aggravated to a very high Degree, by their disputing the Sovereign Dominion of God, and refusing to let the *Israelites* go, notwithstanding the many miraculous Plagues which he wrought for their Conviction. Hitherto the Reasons of
God's

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God's Judgments are *general*, such Vices as all Nations may be equally guilty of, viz. *Infidelity, Rebellion* against God, as the Governor of the World, *cruel Oppression*, &c.

Exactly correspondent to this Account is that which *Moses* gives of the Reasons of the final Destruction of those Nations which God destroyed by the *Israelites*; which Reasons Omniscience foresaw when he promised to give them Possession of those Countries. *Deut. ix. 4. Speak not thou in thine Heart after that the Lord thy God doth cast them out from before thee, saying, for my Righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this Land, but for the Wickedness of these Nations the Lord doth drive them out.*

The *Israelites*, though, as I have already observed, there was something *peculiar* in their Case on Account of their being in Covenant with God, yet they were punished for such Sins as had no Relation to their *particular Circumstances*, but for *general Vices* and *Immoralities*; not only for offending against God as the God of *Israel*, but as the God and Lord of the *whole World*. We must attend to the Relation which the Prophets have made of this Matter. Hear what *Isaiab* says on this Head, *Ch. iii. 14. The Lord will enter into Judgment with the Antients of the People, and the Princes thereof; for ye have eaten up the Vineyard, the Spoil of the Poor is in your Houses. What mean ye that ye beat my People to Pieces, and grind the Faces of the Poor, saith the Lord God of Hosts? Moreover, the Lord saith, because the Daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched-out Necks, and wanton Eyes, walking and mincing as they go, therefore the Lord will smite with the Scab, &c.* Hear the same Prophet

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denouncing the Judgments of God, in the fifth Chapter, against his Vineyard, the House of Israel. *I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up Briars and Thorns; I will also command the Clouds that they rain no Rain upon it. For the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel, and the Men of Judah his pleasant Plant; and he looked for Judgment, but behold Oppression; for Righteousness, but behold a Cry.—Wo unto them that join House to House, that lay Field to Field, till there be no Place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the Earth.—Wo unto them that rise up early in the Morning that they may follow strong Drink, that continue until Night till Wine inflame them. Therefore my People are gone into Captivity.* In the xxii. Ch. of Ezek. ver. 6, &c. we have a recital of the Sins for which God threatned to punish Jerusalem, viz. *shedding of Blood, despising Parents, Oppression, vexing the Fatherless and Widow, despising holy Things, and profaning Sabbaths, Incest, Extortion, unjust Gain, Adultery, &c.* Much to the same Purpose is Habbaeck's Charge against Chaldaea, Ch. ii. In another Place the scant Measure and the Bag of deceitful Weights are mentioned among other Vices that provoked God to punish them. If these Instances were not sufficient I could cite Passages for every Immorality, but I shall instance but in one more, and that ought not to be omitted because it is so severely stigmatized as a Vice the most odious to God, and the Cause of the Ruin of private Persons, and the Overthrow of Kingdoms. Says Isaiah, Ch. ii. 11, 12. *The lofty Looks of Man shall be humbled, and the Haughtiness of Man shall be brought down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day.*

For

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For the Day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low—v. 21. Wo unto them that are wise in their own Eyes, and prudent in their own Sight. xxiii.

9. *The Lord of Hosts hath purposed it to stain the Pride of all Glory, and to bring into Contempt all the Honourable upon Earth.* This is the constant Language of Scripture. In the 10th Ch. it is said, *That God would send the King of Assyria to punish the Jews for their Hypocrisy, and that after he should have performed the whole Work which God intended, he would then punish the stout Heart of that proud Prince, and the Glory of his high Looks, for saying, that he did it by the Strength of his own Hand, and by his own Wisdom.*

Since we see the Method of God's dealing with sinful Nations, and for what Vices they have been chastised and punished, it concerns us to look narrowly into ourselves, and see what Resemblance there is between us and those People who have felt the Rod of Affliction, that we may prevent the like Fate by a timely Repentance. This is a Part of my Discourse which cannot be more offensive to others than it is disagreeable to myself; but *probing*, though it gives Pain to the tender Operator, as well as to the Patient, is absolutely necessary to a thorough Cure.

Thirdly, But where shall I begin to draw the Comparison? Or where shall I find Room for so large a Description at the End of a Discourse?—If I could follow the *Whoremonger* into his dark Recesses, what Scenes of Lewdness and Obscenity should I discover! Were I capable of seeing all the secret and indirect Methods that are made use of in the Way of *Trade* and *Business*, I am afraid they would *equal*, at least, the *scant Measure*

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sure and deceitful Weights, which the *Prophets* complained of in *their Times*. Were we to examine the common Intercourse of Men in the way of *Acquaintance* and *Friendship*, we should find Numbers of them as deceitful in their Professions of Esteem, as they are fraudulent and tricking in their Transactions; professing the highest Opinion and the kindest Intentions while they have the greatest Indifferency, if not a Dislike towards those whom they caress, and, perhaps, are privately doing them ill Offices.

But why should I waste your Time in *imagining* what passes in *secret*, where no Eye but that of Omniscience can penetrate, when our open Streets, our publick Places and Highways will afford so much Matter of melancholly Complaint? Is it possible to stir out without having our Ears grated with Oaths and Curses; those Names which claim our most awful and affectionate Veneration prostituted to the lowest and most impertinent Uses in Conversation, or still more infamously abused in wishing Damnation to themselves and others? The Profanation of the Sabbath the Scriptures every where represent as a Sin very provoking to God; and the *Christian Sabbath*, though it be not to be observed in the same Manner with the *Jewish*, yet, as it is dedicated to *Christian Worship* and other religious Uses, the Profanation of it must be altogether as criminal; nay *more* criminal, as the *Christian* Institutions are more excellent than the *Jewish*. And how shamefully is it profaned among us! not only by a Neglect of *publick Worship* on That Day; not only by neglecting to employ some Part of it, at least, at Home in reading and meditating, but by taking unnecessary Jour-

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Journeys and following secular Occupations, and that openly too, without Molestation ; while others privately misemploy it in their own Houses! *Publick* Inns make no Scruple of keeping their Doors open, and entertaining Company in Time of Divine Service ; and though the Law requires it, no body will offer to visit them. In some of these Houses of Entertainment there is such Rioting as to be a Nuisance to their Neighbours, and yet no body will attempt to get them suppressed, or regulated. Backbiting and Slandering and every Kind of uncharitable Censure are as frequent as if Humanity were no Part of the Law of Nature, nor brotherly Love any Part of Christianity. Tale-bearing is so general, that many make it their Employment ; and there is so little Regard to Truth that you seldom can depend upon any Thing that you hear. It is not a very agreeable Picture that I have drawn, but it is a strong Likeness, and most large Towns in the Kingdom might have sat for it.

But let us rise to an higher Situation, and remove the Enquiry into the Conduct of Persons in the Top of Life. To use the Prophet *Jeremiah's* Words, *Surely these are poor, they are foolish, for they know not the Way of the Lord, nor the Judgments of their God. I will get me unto the great Men and speak unto Them.* The others are comparatively illiterate and ignorant, but these by the Advantages of their Education have had better Opportunities of knowing their Duty, and by reason of the great Blessings afforded them are under greater Obligations to perform it ; but many of them, far from making suitable Improvements of their Advantages and grateful Returns to Providence, have abused them to the Purposes
of

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of Vice. Instead of being Examples to those who would be influenced by them, they are Patterns of Impiety and Irreligion. They not only live without God in the World, but deny his Being and Providence. They not only neglect all private and publick Prayer, a necessary Acknowledgment of our Dependance on our Creator, but make a Jest of the Duty. The *Sabbath* (as is too well known, those Enormities being now made no great Secret of) is spent at Gaming-Tables in their own Houses, or more publickly profaned by travelling on that Day, without the least Pretence of Necessity, but in utter Contempt of the Constitution of our Country. This Impiety is become so common, about *London* in particular, that our Roads are as full of Carriages and Horses on a *Sunday* as on any other Day. And no wonder that Trades-people, some out of an Ambition to imitate the Quality and Gentry, others out of Conveniency, should run into the Practice. They cannot give themselves any other Day of Pleasure without some *Temporal* Loss; and as they cannot put *Spiritual* Advantages into their Pocket and carry them to Market, it is natural for them to prefer what they can *feel* and *see* and *negotiate*, to invisible though infinitely superior Blessings. Luxury and Voluptuousness are become the Business of the Fashionable and Polite; and, as the necessary Consequence of these expensive Vices, because the necessary Means of supporting them, a general *Corruption* has spread itself thro' the Land, to the Subversion of all Principle, and the publick Good. When the Lust of Ambition, or an intemperate Appetite towards Grandeur, or Pleasure rages, it soon eats out all Sense of Duty, all Regard to the Community, to their Friends,

or

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or Relations; and every generous Consideration must be sacrificed to their narrow Attachment to their Scheme of *present* Enjoyment. And, to keep one another in Countenance, they industriously labour to make People believe that *Corruption* is become a necessary Expedient of Government. I wonder not at all that shameless Prostitutes should have the Assurance to advance any thing that will serve their Ends; but I have been, even in *This* Age, a little surpris'd to hear Persons of some Character and some Understanding turn Advocates for so wicked and so weak a Maxim; a Scheme of Government that must in a little Time defeat its own End. But, what is at present my more immediate Concern to take Notice of, such Vices not only tend in their natural Consequences to the Destruction of their Country, but God, as sure as there is one, will visit a Nation that is guilty of them.

But there is another Sort of *Covetousness*, or *worldly Mindedness* that is become as *Epidemical* as that above-mentioned; and that, too, among Persons of Character for moral Virtue. And, yet, there is hardly any Vice more opprobriously treated, or more severely threatened with temporal as well as eternal Punishment. And there is very good Reason for it, because it takes Possession of the Heart and Affections, and draws them off from the Love and Service of God; for which Reason the Scripture calls it *Idolatry*, a *worshipping* and *serving* the Creature more than the Creator, or at least *besides* him. *Worshipping* any Thing is, *Esteeming*, *Loving*, *Serving*, and *Confiding* in it as our principal Happiness and Support. If they set up this *Idol* in their Heart, as the constant Object of their *Thoughts*, *Wishes*,
and

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and *Trust*, This is robbing God of that *Honour* and *Love* and *Service*, which he claims as our supreme LORD and supreme Good. Men of This Turn, whatever Principles they may *habitually* entertain in *Speculation*, will, *occasionally*, act in Opposition to them, in favour of their darling Scheme of acquiring *Riches*. Tho' these Men be not more criminal in the Sight of God than those who desire Wealth in order to consume it upon their Lusts, or to support their Grandeur, yet they act more absurdly and foolishly. The *Sensualist* and the *Ambitious* propose some reasonable End to themselves in getting *Riches*, for they do it that they may have the Means of gratifying a Passion that has some real Foundation in their Nature, whereas the *Muckworm* who so assiduously pursues his worldly Schemes only that he may get Possession of so much more Money and leave so much more behind him, can receive no other Pleasure from such Acquisitions than what consists in satisfying an unnatural Appetite that is perpetually torturing him. A Man that has a perpetual Thirst upon him gratifies his Palate while he is drinking, but That Pleasure will not compensate for the constant Uneasiness of *Craving*. But I am not so much concerned in the *Folly*, as in the *Wickedness* of this Vice. If they could thus gravely play the Fool without hurting others I would be contented to leave them to the Enjoyment of their childish Amusements, but they are injurious to *Society*, as well as to their *own Souls*, in that they will often be wanting in their Duty to their *Neighbour* and the *Publick*, and by encreasing our *National Wickedness*, help to bring down the Anger of Heaven upon us, and *obstruct the Success of our Designs for the*

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publick Good. For can we expect that God will go out with our *Fleets and Armies* unless we look upon him as our best Friend and Benefactor, and render ourselves worthy of his Protection by esteeming and loving and serving him above all Things.

I must observe farther upon this Head, that those who have no Prospect of accumulating *Wealth*, may be *worldly-minded*. Their *Hearts* and *Affections* may be equally engaged in the Pursuit of the *Comforts*, or *Necessaries* of Life, as if they aimed at the greatest *Opulency*; and such a Degree of *Anxiety* and *Sollicitude* is equally inconsistent with the *Love* and *Service* of God. And This Sort of *Worldly-mindedness* shews itself in the lowest *Tradesman*, in the *Farmer*, in the *Artificer*, and the *Day-labourer*.

There is one Vice too common amongst us, which is both the *Growth* and *Parent* of many others; I mean, the Abuse of *Patronage*. In a Treatise on That Subject I proved, beyond Contradiction, that it is a *Trust*, and, consequently, that Patrons are not at Liberty to dispose of their Preferments *arbitrarily*, but are obliged, in conscience, to have a constant Regard to the *Ends* for which those Endowments were granted, and to the equitable Claims of Merit and Capacity. *Patrons* are Trustees for the *Clergy*, to give them their proper Wages and Reward; they are Trustees for the *People*, to provide them such Pastors as are most able and willing to teach them their Duty; they are Trustees for *Religion*, to nominate such Persons as are most likely to promote it. If, therefore, very large Portions of ecclesiastical Endowments be given to Those whose Services in the Church have deserved a much less Share of them,

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them, while others who have merited more, are but meanly provided for, here is a Misapplication of publick Money, and Injustice done to those whose Labours entitle them to it. If at any Time a Person should be promoted to a Preferment, not because he was fitted for it, but because the Preferment was fit for *him*, the *People* who are to be instructed by him must be great Sufferers in their religious Concerns, and the Interest of *Religion* must suffer with them. The Abuse of This very important Trust is of a complicated Nature, the Guilt of it proportionably aggravated, and the Consequences of it highly pernicious in many Respects. I could say a great many severe Things on this Head which I would defy all the Wit of Man to gainsay, but I have suggested Hints sufficient to put *conscientious* Persons upon thinking of it in a very serious Way. The Commonness of a Practice may lessen People's Abhorrence of it, and the Number of Offenders may serve to keep one another in Countenance; but neither *Practice*, nor *Numbers*, nor *Characters*, can alter *the Nature of Things*. I am fully convinced that the Abuse of This Trust has been one of the *grand* Causes of the Decay of Religion, and that a conscientious Discharge of it would be one of the most likely of all natural Means of recovering it. I shall add no more than this, *viz.* that at the great Tribunal at the last Day all Patrons will be asked some Questions which many of them will not be able to answer, in any other Way than by Silence and Confusion.

But there is a Vice behind, more flagrant, more provoking and daring than any that I have mentioned, which, I fear, is not so uncommon as it is heinous. *Every Vice* is an Act of Disobedience
to

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to the Authority, and injurious to the Honour of God. The Neglect of *Prayer*, especially of *publick* Worship, is refusing to make an Acknowledgment of his *Providence*, and is tempting him to leave us destitute of his Protection and Blessing. An *actual Denial* of his Existence and Government is a kind of voluntary *Outlawry*; but to acknowledge his *Being*, and bid open Defiance to his *Power*, This is an Insult that not only *deserves*, but *demand*s and *challenges* God to make bare his Arm, and send the audacious Rebel into the next World to repent in Chains of Darknes. Of this outrageous Nature is the Sin of *Perjury*; and of the *Commonness* of this outrageous Vice our *Places* and *Offices*, not to say our Courts of *Justice*, are a standing Witness. I myself often hear People talk of taking an Oath, as of a Matter of *Form*, and of an *indifferent* Nature; and I am well informed, that it is become a customary thing with Persons to take an Oath, not only without due Seriousness, but even in a *ludicrous* Manner, as if it were a Trifle below a grave Reflection; and This, too, in Places which I dare not mention. And, considering the heedless Temper of Mankind, the Frequency of Oaths, and the slovenly Manner of administering them, it is the less to be wondered at that Men should lose That Awe with which such a solemn Act of Religion would naturally strike their Minds. I make no Scruple to declare that This is a Scandal to our Constitution, and the greatest Injury to the publick Welfare. For what can be more irreligious than to lessen the Reverence of Oaths? Or what can be more injurious to the Society than to destroy their grand Security for all the Blessings of it? One can hardly tell which to wonder at most
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in *modern Policy*, the *Wickedness*, or the *Folly* of it. Great Pains have been taken to weaken the Influence of *Oaths* by ruining *Religion*, and yet at the same Time they have been *multiplying* them while they do every thing that may render them *insignificant*. But there is one Thing *more* to be admired than even their egregious *Wickedness*, or *Folly*; I mean, the *Goodness* of God, not only in bearing so much with such outrageous Impiety, but in restraining the Licentious, who have no Restraints from Conscience, but many Temptations from Nature and Condition, often to swear their fellow Subjects out of their *Fortunes*, their *Lives*, or *Liberties*. To this over-ruling Power is it owing, that, when *Bribery* and *Subornation* of Evidence are so much practised, and there is such a general Inclination to *receive* Bribes, the Consequences are not more fatal. I hope, the Legislature, for the Honour of their Maker, out of regard to the Good of the Publick, and their own Safety, will consider how to recover to Oaths their due Reverence and Force. Indeed, all other Methods must be ineffectual unless Men have a just and awful Sense of God; but the making this Appeal to him so very common and familiar necessarily tends to weaken the Solemnity of it. Besides, taking *unnecessary* Oaths is *vain* Swearing; and all Oaths are unnecessary where the Ends of Society may be answered without them. And that This is the Case, will appear from what I have observed concerning the necessary Effects of *Familiarity*. For, if it renders them cheap, their Force in general being weakened, the Society will lose more in Matters of great Weight than it can gain in lesser ones.

The

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The next and last Article that I shall mention, though it be not in its Nature so exceeding sinful, nor in its Consequences so fatal, is, however, very criminal, argues a very great Want of Religion, and makes all the other Vices the more dangerous, because it makes a Reformation the more difficult; I mean, a general *Unconcernedness* about these Things; for unless Men have such a Feeling and warm Sense of them as to have their Indignation raised and their Fears awakened, it is impossible that they should exert themselves in their several Capacities with proper Vigour. But what Signs do we see in their Behaviour and Conduct of their being thus inwardly affected? We know in what Manner the Passions of Anger and Hatred express themselves, by Looks and Words, in other Instances; and if they were heartily incensed against Vice, and had a just Hatred of it, those Passions would appear in the same Manner, upon that Occasion. If Men have any other Interest at Heart, we know with what Industry and Earnestness, with what Courage and Perseverance they will pursue it; and the same hearty Concern for the Interest of *Religion* and *Virtue* would produce as great Activity and Resolution in promoting them. We know how tender Men are of the Reputation of an earthly Friend, or Benefactor; how quick to resent, how forward to revenge any Injury done to it; and should not their Concern for the Honour of their *Creator* and *Redeemer* be proportionably greater, as he is so much kinder to us than it is possible for us to be to one another? But is this commonly the Case? Or, rather, do we not usually see the very Reverse of it? When a Man hears another swear and curse, does he seem so

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much affected? Is he equally ready to do Justice upon the Offender for so great an Indignity offered to God? Nay, does he seem to take Notice of it at all, with any Grief, or Indignation? And, as to any Attempt towards getting him punished, it is so unusual a Thing that the very *Singularity* of it renders any Information disagreeable. Does any *other* Vice occasion a just Grief and Resentment? On the contrary, as far as I have seen of Mankind, they are, most of them, perfectly indifferent and unmoved. If they do express any Dislike, it is with the greatest Coldness. If they make any Attempt towards suppressing it, they do it with the greatest Indolence; are soon tired, soon discouraged by the Appearance of Trouble, of Difficulty, of Danger, or Expence. As to the *Consequence* of the Prevalency of Impiety and Irreligion upon the Welfare of the Society, either from their natural Tendency, or from the Judgments of *Heaven*, few seem to be affected with any Apprehensions of that Kind. They are as insensible of its *pernicious*, as they are of its *odious* Nature.

And, now, this being a true Account of the *general* Disposition of the Nation, or some of the best Part of it (for many are professed Friends to Vice, and Enemies to Virtue; very industrious to discountenance the one, and propagate the other) what a melancholy Prospect does it afford to a considering Person? What Reason have we to expect that God will give himself any Concern for the Safety and Welfare of a Nation who are so unconcerned for his Honour? Nay, what Reason have we not to fear that he will make an Example of such Hypocrites, who pretend to have a Sense of Religion while

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while they do little or nothing to shew it? And our Danger, as I observed, is the greater because there is hardly a Possibility, in the ordinary Course of Things, but that we shall grow worse and worse for want of a common Means of Reformation. The poorer Sort of People are so illiterate that it is difficult to give them any Notion of Religion; the Generality of the fashionable Class are as much *above* it, as the others are *below* it. The former are almost *incapable*, and the latter are as *impatient* of any Advice, or Improvement, and take care to prevent such Uneasiness by keeping out of the Way of it. What little Religion remains in the Nation lies in the middle Region, but it is very much impaired by its Communication with two such infectious Borderers. And if we make it necessary for God to visit us for our Sins, our Visitation will be the heavier, because our Sins are greatly aggravated, by reason of the singular Advantages, and the extraordinary Means of Improvement with which God has blessed this Nation. If Men be ignorant *here*, it is under the greatest Light that any People in the World enjoy; the Word of God is in every one's Hands; the best Helps towards understanding it; and the greatest Variety of the most excellent Books written in Explanation of the Doctrines and Duties of *Christianity*. If they be without the Assistance of God's Grace to enlighten their Minds and mend their Hearts, it is under all the Means that can be had; our Religion professed in its greatest Purity, and the Sacraments duly administered.

Thus I have taken Notice of some of the most notorious and provoking of our national Vices: God knows, I could have made the Catalogue

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much longer, but the Reckoning, as I have stated it, is heavy and black enough to awaken our Fears. Compare our publick Condition with the State of those Nations who have been chastised by the avenging Hand of God, and then tell me whether we have not too much Reason to expect the same Fate. If any one be disposed to differ with me, let him, if he can, disprove any of the Propositions that I have laid down, concerning God's *moral Attributes*, the *History of his providential Dispensations*, the *State of the Nation*, or the *Conclusion drawn from them*. If he does not care to enter into the Merits of the Cause let him, at least, have the Modesty to be silent. You know, I have always preached this Doctrine to you, ever since I came among you, in *private*, as well as in *publick*. I am inclined, for Reasons which I assigned in my Sermon before the Commons, *May 29th, 1742*, to hope that God, in Mercy, will not suffer us to go on and fill up the Measure of our Iniquities; and therefore since we are beyond the Reach of *ordinary* Means to reclaim us, there is the more Reason to think that kind Providence, like a good Father, will give us some proper Corrections to awaken and soften us. However, as we know not the Time of his Visitations, it is our Business to endeavour to appease the Divine Wrath, to try to avert those impending Judgments which hang over our Heads, and obtain the Divine Protection which is necessary to the Safety of all States. And, therefore, I shall conclude with telling you what I apprehend to be your Duty on this Occasion.

If I were speaking to *Gentlemen* of large Fortunes and extensive Influence, I would advise *them*

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to make use of all the Advantages of their Situation to restrain Vice and promote Virtue, to countenance all good Undertakings, and assist those who have Honesty and Zeal enough to engage in them; to be Examples of *Integrity* and *Piety* to their Inferiors; to keep up a Sense of *Religion* in their *Families*, which cannot fail of spreading itself, not only among their *Children* and *Servants*, but among their *Tenants* and *Neighbours*; particularly to be constant in their Attendance upon *publick Worship*, which is the *great Means of Religion*, and the most likely Way to procure the Blessing of *Providence* upon the Community.

If I were addressing myself to any in the *Magistracy*, I would exhort them to use their *Authority* as well as their *Credit*, for the Service of *Religion* and *Virtue*; for by such a Behaviour they will act as becomes their Station. Whoever promotes Religion and Virtue, and checks Vice most, will execute his Commission the most faithfully: And, however the Indolent and the Timorous may flatter their Consciences into a false Peace, they must be answerable for all the Good that by their Vigilance and Activity they might have done, and for all the Evil that they might have prevented.

But, though *you*, my Brethren, are not clothed with civil Power, you have, all, some Influence in your Families, and in your Neighbourhood. In your Families, you have some Authority over your Children and Servants; among your Neighbours and Acquaintance, you have the Influence of your Interest and Credit. The former you can command; the latter you can prudently reprove and advise: And every possible Way by

which any one, let his Station be what it will, can promote Piety and Virtue, or the Happiness of his Brother, he is obliged to use. *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour*, and not suffer Sin upon him. This Precept is not restrained to the Clergy, but extends itself to all Mankind. The Law of *Charity* binds it upon you. If you saw any one in Danger of falling into a Pit, or down a Precipice, would you not endeavour to prevent his Ruin? Much more ought you to endeavour to prevent his *eternal* Destruction. Every one prays that *God's Will may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*, and is not every one bound to do every Thing in his Power towards the Success of his Prayers? The Laws of *Society* lay a farther Obligation upon you to use your utmost Endeavours to promote Religion and Virtue, as necessary to social Happiness; and the present Times call for all your Industry Prudence and Vigour. The Kingdom is very wicked. Cities and large Towns are the most corrupted. In this Place, I am sure there is much Vice, among the lower Sort, and many Disorders; and much might be done towards restraining and regulating them, if those of the best Understanding and most Weight among you would enter into concerted Measures, and heartily join in putting them in Execution. I must deal plainly with you, and tell you, that the Reason why you do not set about it is, because you have not a quick and tender Sense of your Duty. If you had but half as much Zeal for the Honour of God and the Interest of Religion, as you have for your own Credit and Interest; if you were half as intent upon serving your Maker, to whom you owe every Thing, as you are to get Money, you would try all possible Means

to

A FAST-DAY SERMON. 103

to prevent the infamous Prophanation of the Sabbath in this Town, and rectify other Irregularities that are not only a Reproach to a *Christian*, but a Scandal to any *Civil Society*. I have assured many of you, that I am ready to concur with you; but an Attempt of that Nature, without your Assistance, would be attended with no other Effect than the Loss of that Esteem and Affection which alone can give me any Influence among you. For my *own* Sake, I should be loth to lose them, because they are my Comfort and my Glory. For *your* Sakes, likewise, I am very desirous to preserve them, as they give me the more Power to do you good. But while I am labouring to persuade you to reform *others*, I must remind you that the Reformation must begin, where *Charity* always begins, and too often ends, at *Home*. If you mean to prevent the Profanation of the *Sabbath*, you must keep it *yourselves*. If you mean to persuade others to be constant at *Church*, you must set the Example, as well as give Advice. If you mean, with any Success, to regulate *disorderly Houses*, they will expect to see Temperance and good Order in your own Houses and Behaviour.

My Brethren, I have now discharged my own Conscience in telling you your Duty. If you will still remain idle and unconcerned for the Honour of God, the Interest of Religion, and the Good of your Neighbours, *your Blood will be on your own Heads, see ye to it.*

Before I conclude, I must direct myself to those whose Circumstances may not, perhaps, give them much Influence over others. I must inform them, that they may do something towards averting God's Judgments, by reforming their *own*

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Families and themselves, which can hardly fail of having some Effect upon their Acquaintance ; however, it will give them an *Interest* with the *Almighty*. The lowest *Artificer*, the *Farmer*, the *Day-labourer*, any one may be just, and temperate, and honest, and pious. Even the *Beggar*, though clothed in Rags, can have his Mind adorned with the *Robes of Righteousness*. He can send up his Prayers for his Country with as much Faith and Ardency as the greatest Monarch, and his Prayers will as soon be accepted at the Throne of Heaven. By thus uniting together in a good Life, and a constant Course of Devotions, we shall have a *standing Force* much more impentrate than the closest *Phalanx* ; much more powerful than Fleets and Armies and all the Implements of War. We shall then make *Omnipotence* our Friend ; and *who can thunder with a Voice like his ?* If God be for us, *who can be against us ?* If this Nation were, all, *truly Christian, strictly pious and virtuous*, I should be under no Apprehensions from a Junction of all the Powers on Earth against us. I would take up the Words of the Prophet, “ Say ye not a *Confederacy*, to all them to whom this People shall say a *Confederacy* ; neither fear ye their Fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let *Him* be your Fear, and let *Him* be your Dread. Trust ye in the LORD for ever, for in the LORD JEHOVAH IS EVER-
“ LASTING STRENGTH.”

To Him be ascribed all Honour, Might, Majesty and Dominion.

This

This Letter was occasioned by One directed to a Weekly Journal, intitled, Common Sense, and subscribed Common Honesty; giving an Account of his bad Reception in the World.

Mr. HOOKER,

I WAS the other Day kept in waiting for a Friend at a Coffee-house, and having finished the usual Course of Papers for the Day, by Way of further Amusement I took up one of the Books of *Political Journals* that lay near me. It proved to be one of your Brethren of modern Note, but of a Family much more ancient than numerous, though their Name seems to claim Kindred with almost the whole Nation. Those few that are scattered up and down are very little taken notice of, but within the narrow Sphere of Action to which they are confined, very serviceable and agreeable. They are generally inclined to Retirement, because the Opinions and Customs of the World are quite opposite to their Taste; in Conversation, disposed to Taciturnity from the same Disgust; by Principles and Constitution, inclin'd strongly towards universal Benevolence, but through great Provocation from the Vices and Follies of Mankind sometimes made sour and morose; complaisant in Temper, but by being often obliged to contradict and reprove others, now and then somewhat Peevish and Saryrical.—After this short Account of the Family from which your Brother *Journalist* borrows his Title,

I shall inform you that he calls himself *Common-Sense*. Whether he be a genuine Branch of that honourable Stock I shall not enquire. I know as little of him, as he does of me, or perhaps of his Correspondent whose Letter has occasioned mine. This Gentleman, unless he be an Impostor and has usurp'd a Name that does not belong to him, is his near Relation, for he pretends to be of the Family of *Common Honesty*; who, both, have the same Original, *viz. Truth, and Religion*. If we consult the Etymology of *Common Honesty*, from its natural Import we should be apt to conclude that every Town and Village in *England* is peopled with this Race, and yet it seems at present to be almost extinct among us. There are many distant Relations, but very few of the Name, and fewer still who are lineally descended. And it happens luckily enough that there are no more of them remaining since the Estate of the Family is so impair'd that those few live in a mean Way, despised and insulted by those Intruders who have got Possession of *their* rightful Inheritance. If there were more of them left, they must be forced to go a begging, and would meet with as little Charity, as the Correspondent above-mentioned did Employment.—I have often wondered why these two Families are call'd *Common Sense*, and *Common Honesty*, when they are both so *uncommon*. I presume *Common* was added to the original Name at a Time when they were flourishing and very numerous; and as it was expressive of their Strength and Reputation, it was an honourable Addition, but there cannot be a greater Banter upon the Family than it is now. *Common Sense's* Correspondent, who wrote such a mournful Narrative of his Usage, has given me

Oc-

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Occasion to reflect seriously upon the present State of *Common Honesty*, and I send you the following Remarks for publick Use. If he had considered the manifest Causes of the Decay of the Family, he would have been less surpris'd than he seems to have been. With your Leave, Sir, I design to enquire into some of the principal ones, from whence it will appear by what Means its Credit and Interest may be recovered, as well as how they came to be destroyed.

They derived, from their original Stock, *Truth* and *Religion*, certain Maxims and Rules of Life which, while observed, procured them universal Esteem, and made them considerable in the World. Integrity of Intention and Simplicity of Manners adorned and recommended their Conduct. Their general End in View was, the general Good. No one Branch of the Family carried on any private Interest separate from that of the Whole. They were all closely united in one single Scheme. This common End they pursued uniformly by plain and direct Methods in Obedience to the *Will* of their original Parents, a Copy of which * was delivered to every one of them. They are there taught, that their Prosperity being the Care of Providence, their wisest Way must be such only as is agreeable to their Patron, and that nothing can be agreeable to Providence which is inconsistent with any moral Virtue; that all indirect Arts must be as useless to *Omniscience* and *Omnipotence*, as they are inconsistent with the Divine Rectitude; that their invisible Guardian being *Goodness* and *Veracity* itself, he could no more fail those whom he has promised to assist and protect, than *infinite Power* could want Ability

* The Bible.

to perform its Promises. Thus connected by common Principles in the same common Interest, directed in the Pursuit of it by the Dictates of unerring Wisdom, under the Inspection of an All-seeing Eye, and under the continual Safeguard of an Omnipotent Arm, they went on vigorously, joyfully, successfully; admired, beloved, and feared; encouraging one another, and bidding Defiance to all Opposition.—But *Policy*, that subtle intriguing Race, of diabolical Extraction, found out Means of corrupting, dividing, and ruining them.

Their first Stratagem was, to persuade the weaker Sort that the pretended Will of their original Parents was a Cheat, contrived by some artful Knaves, who have ever since got a Livelihood by explaining what they themselves invented. And with those who were convinced that it was not genuine, it was easy to discredit the Directions given in it; and, in the Room of the most generous, enlarg'd Maxims of *true Wisdom*, reaching to the whole of our Nature, to the whole Extent of Beings, to the whole Extent of Duration, to substitute the narrow Principles of *Cunning*, calculated chiefly for the inferior Part of our Nature, confined to the little Circle of each one's particular Happiness, and that too respecting only the present Time without any Regard to Futurity.

Such as had too strong an Understanding and too much Attention to be *speculatively* imposed upon, This crafty Generation beguiled by taking Advantage of the great Variety of Foibles and Infirmities inherent in human Nature. Having in vain made frequent Attempts upon the *Judgment*, they applied with more Success to the *Passions*.

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The Reader must understand that *Policy* had the Direction of several Families which Mankind are usually desirous of being well with.

That of *Wealth* is the great Favourite with all little Minds that are taken with *Appearances*. This Family keeps an open Warehouse in all Parts of the Kingdom, but their grand Repository of Goods is in this populous and opulent City, to which Fools repair from all Parts of the Kingdom to be supplied and deceived. They have all Sorts of fine *Baubles* that look prettily to the Eye, and by the Management of the Director General, *Policy*, poor Creatures are made to believe, they are as useful as they are entertaining to the Sight; tho' they be direct Poison to most People who meddle with them, and have one peculiar Quality, destructive of rational, or real Happiness, which is, to breed Vanity and Levity of Mind. They have several Kinds of *shining Pebbles* which, it is pretended, will give great Comfort to the Wearer, whether worn in the Garments, the Hair, or the Ears. These *Trinkets* are mostly used for the Deception of the *Female* Part. They have others, equally influential over both Sexes; Pieces of *Metal*, of various Colours, and Scraps of *Paper*, marked in a particular Manner. These will do strange Things, beyond the boasted Feats of a Mountebank, tho' you should make no other Use of them than to lock them up in an iron Chest, or in some other Place of Safety. The *bare Possession* of them is generally sufficient, since they operate chiefly by the Help of the *Imagination*.

These last, though they have no *intrinsic* Value, will purchase almost every thing in this World, except *Virtue* and *Happiness*; and it is the Business

ness of *Policy* to encrease and enlarge our Desires as much as possible. Notwithstanding the Instructions, so often inculcated in the *Will*, concerning the true Nature of human Happiness; notwithstanding an express Declaration, in so many Words, that *it does not consist in the Abundance of our Possessions*, many of our Family (for I claim the Honour of being of it) have been seduced, by their Suggestions, into an Opinion that we cannot be happy unless we have a great many more Things than we really want. These *imaginary Wants* are as importunate for Supplies as *real* ones, and make us as great Slaves to *Wealth* as if her *Superfluities* were all *Necessaries*.

There are two other Families of very considerable, though to that of *Wealth* inferior, Influence; *Honour*, and *Power*; both in some measure dependant on the other.

The first of these have in their Gift several Sorts of *Titles*, of so engaging a Sound, that the very mention of them shall immediately procure the Possessor Precedency and Respect in publick, great Consolation at home in his own Mind; for it is observed, that the Pronunciation of these magnificent Words alter the Person's Opinion of himself, as much as they change his Appearance in the Eyes of the World.

The Family of *Power* has its attractive Charms peculiar to itself. It gives *Direction* and *Command*; and so exquisite are the Arts of *Policy*, they have contrived Ways to establish an Opinion among Mankind that *Direction* and *Command* necessarily carry with them, in their very Idea, Happiness to the Owners; the very reverse of which is actually true in Fact, and must be so from

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from the Imperfection of human Nature. The proper Happiness of any Being does not consist in having the Direction of the Actions of *other* Beings, but in *the Liberty of acting agreeably to its own Nature*. But to Beings so imperfect as we are there is usually more Trouble, Disappointment, and Vexation, than real Pleasure, attending Power, by reason of the Ignorance and Perverseness both of the Persons *directing*, and *directed*.

Thus by vitiating the Sentiments, inflaming the Passions, and giving them a wrong Direction, the wily Director has almost engrossed the Management of the World, made Dupes of the most judicious, and misguided those of the best Intentions. An Alliance between two Families of such opposite Extraction, Principles, and Interest seems as unnatural as between the two Nations of *France* and *England*; yet a League offensive and defensive has subsisted for several Years between some of the chief Heads and principal Branches of ours and theirs. While they openly profess'd their Enmity to our Cause, their Disbelief of the Validity of our Grand Charter, their Dislike to all the Rules and Maxims contained in it, and even to the *very Name* of our Family, we have given them the Credit of our most intimate Friendship and the Advantage of our warmest Assistance towards the Execution of *their* Schemes, which in the main must necessarily be destructive of *our* Interest, however in some incidental Matters the mutual Interest of both may happen to co-incide. Nay, so exquisite has been their Skill in playing upon us their insinuating Allies, *Wealth, Honour,* and *Power*, that they have persuaded us to join with them in representing our most faithful and active *Friends* as *Enemies*, to set Marks of the blackest

blackest Ignominy upon them, to shun them as infectious, to render them insignificant by keeping them poor, and consequently despicable in common Estimation; if not to distress them by ill Usage, at least to give them no publick Countenance; while Places of Profit and Trust are often put into the Hands of such as shew the least Concern for our Cause, or the smallest Abilities to promote it; and sometimes of Persons of known Disaffection, or suspected Integrity. — Where they could not impose upon our Judgment by false Glosses, or practise upon our *Avarice*, or *Ambition*, they have taken Advantage of our *Fears*, and persuaded us under the specious Pretence of *prudent Caution*, to suffer them to be continually sapping our Foundations, lest by an Opposition we should provoke them to take us by storm; to submit to a *certain* lingering Death, rather than run the Hazard of a sudden one. While Things are thus managed, our Relation, *Common Sense*, would laugh if we should wonder at the Discredit and Weakness of our Family, that so many of them are drawn off to the Party of *Policy* for the Sake of present Advantages, and that others are afraid, or ashamed to own their Parentage.

But there are other Things worth Notice, that help to weaken us. *Indolence* and *Envy* have done us almost as much Mischief as *Avarice* and *Ambition*. The latter have been strong Incitements to Desertion and fatal Compliances; the former have produced Idleness, Inactivity, and mischievous Detraction. These unanimated Creatures are impatient of Trouble, and afraid of every Thing that may affect their Quiet, and interrupt the Tranquillity of their *still* Life; like Drones in the

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the Hive, who take no Pains to make Honey, but live upon the Fruits of the Labours and Dangers of the Industrious; and, not contented to be at rest in their peaceful and safe Obscurity, privately wishing well to the Cause which they will not publickly promote, they are apt to take from the Merit of Industry and Courage. As a Cover to their unenterprising Indifference, a laudable Zeal shall be represented as Enthusiastical Heat, every brave Attempt for the Service of the Common Interest, Romantick Temerity.

If I have shewn the principal Causes of our Decay, I have at the same Time pointed out the only effectual Methods for our Recovery; *viz.* a perfect Union among ourselves; an Encouragement and Support of each other, without any Regard to Distinctions invented by our Enemies; an *active* and resolute Opposition to all those whose *Principles* and *Measures* are contrary to ours, whatever they may think fit to call themselves, or whatever Pretences of Friendship they may make; an uniform and strict Observance of the Rules prescribed us by *Truth* and *Religion*; and a firm Trust in *Providence* for its Protection and Blessing in the use of *direct* Means, rather than in the deceitful Maxims and *indirect* Methods of *Human Wisdom*.

And if *Policy* would condescend to take Advice of an open, plain, artless Enemy, I would recommend it to their Consideration, how they can propose to subsist after the Destruction of *our* Principles and Family; what uniform Principle they can substitute in the Room of the former, and how they can confide in any but the latter; what Security they can have that every one shall not have an Interest in View *separate* from the

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common Interest of the Family, according as Humour, Resentment, and a Variety of opposite Passions and Sentiments in different Persons shall operate differently. Reflections upon human Nature will shew, in *Speculation*, that *Common Policy* without the Assistance of *Common Honesty* must unavoidably come to Destruction; and a View of their present corrupted, distracted, ruinous Condition is a melancholy Proof of this Truth from *Experience*.

I am, Mr. HOOKER's

Sincere Friend and

Affectionate Brother,

PROBUS.

A
SERMON
ON THE
DUTY of Keeping
THE
WHOLE LAW.

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WHOLE LAW.

P R E F A C E.

TH E Reader will expect a Reason for this Publication, and I'll give him the true one. I have taken some Pains to write a plain Discourse upon a very important, Practical Subject. Very imperfect as it is, if it be read with that Attention of Mind, and apply'd with That Integrity of Heart with which it was written, I flatter myself, that a much wiser and better Man than the Author may be the better for it.

Such Discourses were never more wanted. Mens Thoughts are so busied about the Truths of Religion, that they seem to forget the Practice of it. While it is guarded, by excellent Writings, against external Attacks, it suffers an inward Decay from the Lives of its Professors; as a Town, well defended by the Garrison, tho' it be not taken by the Enemy, may run to ruin thro' the Neglect of its Inhabitants.

Controversies and Disputations are to Religion, what Wars are to a Kingdom; sometimes necessary to its Security and Preservation, but always attended with Danger, and accompanied with bad Effects, however successful. Some will be seduced, and others tainted in their Principles; many more diverted from employing their leisure Hours upon more profitable Books. When the Head is continually filled with nice Distinctions, the Heart grows dead to religious Dispositions. It becomes Matter of Amusement, rather than of Religion; and tho' the Understanding may be exercised, the Mind may be never the better. Some indeed must be well

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skilled and exercised in This military Discipline, because Religion will ever be exposed to Hostilities from irreligious Men; but Christians in general, who are neither call'd to the Service, nor fit for it, if They venture into the Field, unauthorised and unarmed, only to see the Manner of an Engagement, their Curiosity may be their Destruction.

To speak out of Figure. Illiterate Persons should not meddle with subtile Disputes, because they are not competent Judges of them. They may chance to be perverted for Want of Understanding the Force of an Argument. At least, 'tis odds but they are confounded, and left unsettled in their Faith. What Time they have to spare for reading, would be much better spent in practical than in speculative Studies; plain Discourses that may teach them their Duty, and excite them to the Practice of it: But more especially in the frequent reading of the Scriptures, which will not only bring them acquainted with the Particulars of their Duty, but kindle in their Hearts a true Spirit of Piety; strengthen their Faith, and inflame their Hope: and be the best Security against the Infection of Infidelity. Those sacred Writings, where Men have an Intimacy with them, carry their own Conviction along with them. Men that read them often, and with a serious Disposition, feel the Truth of them. But it is highly irrational in those who believe the Bible to be the Will of their Creator and Judge, never to look into it; to be the Rule of their Faith, and yet never to examine what Doctrines it teaches; to be the Measure of their Actions, and yet never to enquire what Duties it enjoins, and to compare their Actions with this Rule, to see whether they come up to the Conditions of Salvation.

St. JAMES ii. 10, 11.

*For whosoever shall keep the Whole Law,
and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of
all.*

*For he that said, Do not commit Adultery,
said also, Do not Kill: wherefore, if thou
commit no Adultery, yet, if thou Kill,
thou art become a Transgressor of the
Law.*

THESE words were spoken upon a particular Occasion; a notorious Instance of Injustice and Partiality shewn to a rich Man in a Cause depending before the Jewish Consistories: And they seem to have been levelled against a loose Maxim of the Jewish Doctors, viz. That God gave so many Commandments to them, that by doing any ONE of them they might be saved. In Consequence of which Opinion, they singled out some one Commandment, esteemed by them among the weightier Matters of the Law, wherein they exercised themselves in a more especial manner, in Hopes by that Means to obtain, if not a Dispensation, yet at least a Pardon, for neglecting the rest. — To this pernicious error St. James gives a direct Answer in my Text; and supports it by a clear Argument. He declares, that if we be ever so strict in the Observance, not only of one of the most important Commandments of the Law, but even of the whole
I 4 Law,

Law, excepting only *one single* Point wherein we knowingly and wilfully transgress, such a wilful transgression makes us guilty of the *whole*; and the Reason assigned for it is This, that every Part of the Christian Law is enforced by the same Authority.

And to the same Purpose our Blessed Saviour himself says, That *whofo breaketh one of the LEAST* of his Commandments, and teacheth Men so, shall be called the *LEAST* in the Kingdom of Heaven: Meaning, as I apprehend, Those who held the lawfulness of transgressing *some* of the divine Précepts, under a Pretence of their being of *little Moment*, or for the Sake of a *more careful* and *punctual* observance of *some other* Parts of the Law.

Having thus opened these Words of the Apostle, the Reader must perceive of what infinite consequence it is rightly to understand them, lest we wrest them to our own Destruction either thro' *Licentiousness*, or *Despair*. And a little Observation upon the *World* and Reflection upon *ourselves* may serve to convince us, that we are *all* of us, *more or less*, concerned in the Application of them. Wherefore I beg his careful and serious Attention while I treat of these following Particulars.

- I. I shall more particularly state and explain the Doctrine contained in these Words of St. James, and shew in what Sense it is that the Apostle requires an *universal Righteousness*, or an observance of the *whole Law* of God.
- II. I shall consider the Apostle's *Manner of expressing* this Doctrine, with what *Propriety* we may

may be said to be guilty of the *whole Law*, when we transgress only a *particular Part* of it.

III. I shall endeavour to shew the *Reasonableness* of the Doctrine; and that any Law which does not insist upon our Observance of *every part* of it, can be of *no Efficacy* at all.

IV. I shall make some seasonable and useful Deductions from the foregoing Doctrine.

And lastly, Apply the Discourse to Practice.

I. I shall more particularly state and explain the Doctrine contained in these Words of St. James, and shew in what Sense it is that the Apostle requires an *universal Righteousness*, or an Observance of the *whole Law* of God.

By the *Law* St. James undoubtedly means the *Will of God* revealed to us in his *holy Word*.

And if we understand the Apostle in a *strictly literal* Sense, he may be thought to require an *absolute, unfinning Obedience*; and to declare that a Transgression of *any one* Part of the Christian Law is inconsistent with the *Terms of Salvation* proposed to us by *Christ*.

But this Interpretation cannot be the true one, because it is not only inconsistent with the Condition of human Nature in our present State of Imperfection, but contrary to the general Language of the Gospel, and the Method of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*.

The Scripture every where represents us as *liable to Sin*; that we are *ALL* gone out of the *Way*; that we are *altogether* become *abominable*; that there is *NONE* righteous, no not *ONE*.

If there be any Expressions which seem to require *absolute Perfection*, and *unflinching Obedience*, if we be commanded to *perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*, and to be *perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*; such Expressions are to be taken in a restrained and limited Sense, as obliging us to imitate the Divine Perfections to the *utmost Stretch of human Capacity*. For, the Scripture, like other Writings, must be so understood as to make it consistent with itself in the several Parts of it, and with the general Scope and Tenor of the whole; and my Text must be construed in such a Sense as may agree with the general Account which the *New Testament* gives of the *Nature of Man*, and the State of Religion between God and Man under the *Christian Dispensation*.

Such indeed were the rigorous conditions of the *Jewish Covenant* that the *Law of Moses* required an exact Performance of *every iota and Tittle* of it, in order to Justification by that Law; for which Reason it was called the *Covenant of Works*. And accordingly, when the Apostle sets forth the Conditions of it, he says, *He that does these Things shall live by them*. But the *Christian Covenant* has the Title of the *Covenant of Grace and Mercy*, because it was established upon *better terms and Conditions*, as well as upon *better Promises*. By fulfilling all Righteousness in his own Person, our Blessed Saviour became *our Righteousness*, *his Righteousness* being so far imputed to *us* who believe in him, as to render our *sincere*, though *imperfect*, Obedience accepted; that, as by the *Offence of one many* were made *Sinners*, so by the *Righteousness of one* shall *many* be made *Righteous*.

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From hence therefore it appears, that St. *James* cannot mean to represent the *Christian Covenant* as absolutely condemning every Man who transgresseth any Part of the *Christian Law*, because it supposeth us all to be guilty of frequent *Transgressions*, and provides a *Remedy* for them; Satisfaction to God by the Blood of his Son, and Pardon for us upon the Terms of sincere *Repentance* and *Amendment*. But That *Universal Righteousness* which is required by the Apostle in my Text is only an *universal Regard* to all the divine Precepts; so as not to commit any known, deliberate, wilful Sin, in hopes that a strict Observance of some Duties will atone for the Breach of others; or because we may imagine some of the divine Precepts to be of a less important Nature than others.

This then is the Doctrine of St. *James*. These are the *Terms* of the *Christian Covenant*; not, that Christians are expected to perform *unsinning*, but *impartial* Obedience; not, to be *absolutely perfect*, but to *endeavour* studiously to do the Will of God in every Part of it. To be without *Blemish* and without *Spot*, was never (since the Fall) the Privilege of human Nature, except in the Person of *Christ*, That immaculate Lamb who died to expiate for our Sins; but to be *sincere* and *uniform* in our Endeavours to observe all God's Commands, This is what all of us are capable of performing, and without which there can be no Regard to the Authority of God, or any Religion at all; as I shall shew in the Sequel of this Discourse. But I must next,

II. Consider the Apostle's *Manner of expressing* This Doctrine, with what Propriety any one may be said to be guilty of the *whole Law*, who transgresses only a *Part* of it.

In the obvious Sense of this Phrase, it may seem to contradict *common Reason*, to confound the *Distinction* of Sins, and to make *any one Sin* equal to *all*. Yet *Drunkenness* cannot be *Fornication*, nor *Murder* *Adultery*; much less does any *one* of these Sins contain *all* of them. But the Apostle's *Meaning* is evident enough from his *Manner of reasoning* upon the Case, and his *Way of expressing* it is proper and agreeable to the usual *Way of speaking* in the like Cases. He *means*, that whoever transgresseth *any Part* of a Law transgresseth against the *Will* and *Authority* of the *Lawgiver*, which *unites* the several *Parts* of it together. The *several* Precepts and Prohibitions, which God has published in his *holy Word*, are so many *Parts* of his *Will*; and therefore they may *all* be considered as *one Law*, because *all* of them *together* make up the *one whole* Rule of Action to us his Creatures; and consequently a Breach of any *one* Particular may be called a Breach of the *Whole*. Suppose, for instance, a *Statute* of the Land to consist of many *distinct* *Clauses*, a Breach of any *one* of those *Clauses* would be called, and not improperly, a Breach of *That Statute*. Thus, again, the *Body* of a *Man* is said to be maimed when only *one* *Member* is cut off, and a *Limb* to be broken, tho' it be broken only in *one* Place: But as the *Body* may be *more* or *less* injured in the Loss of its *Parts*, and a *Fracture* may be more or less *complicated*,

plicated, so we may break the *Body* of God's *Laws*, transgress his *Will* in *many* or *fewer* Particulars; and every Breach may be *more* or *less* *criminal*, according to *different* *Circumstances*, which may either *heighten*, or *mitigate* the *Guilt* of our *Actions*.

Having, as I hope, clearly explained this *seemingly* difficult Passage of Scripture, and fully stated the Doctrine contained in it; I shall proceed,

III. To consider the REASONABLENESS and NECESSITY of it; and to shew that a LAW, which does not require an EQUAL REGARD to every Part of it, can have no Effect, can be NO LAW at all.

The Argument of the Apostle upon this Point is grounded upon the following Words; For *he* that said, *Do not commit Adultery*, said also, *Do not Kill*. And the Force of his Reasoning is very clear and obvious: For, if *every Part* of the *Christian Law* has the *same Sanction*, if *every Precept* and *Prohibition* of God be enforced by the *same Authority*, then *all* of them must be *equally* binding upon us, and a wilful Transgression of *any one* must incur the Displeasure of the Divine Lawgiver, because it is a *Violation* of his *Will*, and an *Infringement* of his *Authority*. In short, it is, in the Nature of Things, an *absolute Absurdity* to suppose that *one Part* of a Law, that *one Command* of God should be *less* obligatory than another; or that God should leave us at *Liberty* to disobey him in *one Instance* of Duty, which must effectually subvert his Authority in *every other Instance*, and render *all* his Laws *ineffectual*.

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fectual. If we may choose what Parts of the Christian Law we are to observe, there is at once an End of God's *Legislative Authority*; for, then we follow our *own*, not the Will of God. And if our *own Inclinations* may be the Rule and Measure of our Duty, of what Use will the Law of God be, when it has no *coercive Power* over us? And wherein has it any *coercive Power*, if we be at Liberty to *dispense* with the Obligation at Pleasure? A Duty of Obedience to God, and a Liberty to disobey him; an Authority to command, where there is no Obligation of Obedience upon the Subject; These are, in themselves, palpable Contradictions. Either, therefore, we are obliged to observe every Part, or no Part at all, of God's Law; and an *obstinate Disobedience*, though it be in one Instance only, implies a Denial of God's Authority, as much as a total Disobedience. The Truth of This is acknowledged by all Mankind in the Procedure of their own Courts of Judicature. If any Person be cited to an Appearance, though upon a Matter of a most trifling Nature, his voluntary Non-appearance is considered as a Contempt of the Jurisdiction of the Court, and consequently a Crime of the most heinous Nature, because it subverts the very Foundation upon which Government subsists, and destroys the very Being of Authority.

As this is a Matter of infinite Moment, I shall endeavour to illustrate and enforce the Truth of it by another Instance taken from common Life; which perhaps may better awaken the Attention, and direct the Observation of common Readers. Let us suppose any Father or Master to command his Children, or Servants to do such and such Things; Part of the Command they readily execute,

ecute, the *other* Part they resolutely refuse to comply with. Would he not with Reason conclude, that they disobey'd his Command, and deserv'd his Displeasure, notwithstanding their punctual Observance of his Will in some Particulars? And if they should pretend that they had a reverential Regard to his Authority while they slighted his positive Orders, would he not think their Plea an Aggravation of their Crime, because an open Affront to his Understanding? And can any one of us imagine that the *Great Father and Master* of the *Universe* will be trifled with after a Manner which *we* should resent as the highest Indignity from our *Fellow-Creatures*? The Case, I think, is too obvious to require any farther Illustration.

But I would take Notice of another *Kind* of *partial* Obedience, besides That of neglecting *particular Duties*, or committing *particular Sins*, upon the Pretence of their being, on any Account, of a *less important*, or *less binding* Nature; or because we are more particularly careful in the Performance of some *other* Parts of our Duty. What I mean is *This*; that many Persons *deliberately* go on in the *Neglect* of something which they acknowledge to be their *Duty*, thinking it sufficient to resolve within themselves to do it at some other more convenient Time. I have nothing to do upon This Occasion with the *Uncertainty* whether we shall ever have That *future* Opportunity; nor with the greater *Difficulty* in doing our Duty, which necessarily encreases with the Neglect of it. My present Subject leads me only to observe, that such a *deliberate* and *wilful*, tho' *temporary*, Neglect of a *plain Duty*, is as utterly inconsistent with *any Religious Principle*, as if we intended *always* to *continue* in That Neglect, because

cause it is equally *Rebellion* against the *Dominion* of God over us, absolutely destructive of his *Legislative Authority*, and must unavoidably *invalidate* his Commands. I shall explain my Meaning by an Instance or two, knowing that few Readers will be at much Trouble in understanding, or applying to themselves, an unwelcome Truth. A Man in Business finds, or thinks, it his Interest to keep Company with *irregular* People, and to partake with them in their *Irregularities*. He owns that *Intemperance* is expressly forbidden, and determines to live more *regularly* and *soberly* when he gets above the World, and can afford to break off so profitable an Acquaintance. Thus likewise a Person in the Fervour of his Youth, or the Vigour of Health, feels strong Inclinations towards the *other Sex*; he does not think it expedient, in respect to his *outward Circumstances*, to bring the Expences of a *Family* upon himself, nor cares to be at the Trouble and Uneasiness of denying his importunate Desires; upon which he indulges in prohibited Pleasures, flattering himself that they will be excused, so long as he entertains Thoughts, one Time or another, of discontinuing them, when he shall find it expedient to *alter his Condition*. These two Cases I know, from the open Confessions of several, to be frequent ones. But if this Discourse should fall into the Hands of any such *Deceivers of themselves*, I beg them seriously to consider how impossible it is that the *Auithority* of God can subsist, or that his *Laws* can have any Effect, if we be at *Liberty* to observe them only when we think it *convenient*, and consistent with our *present Pleasure*. If *Intemperance* and *Uncleanness* be *Vices* they are as much so to
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Day as they'll be five Years hence, when *our* Circumstances may be changed ; and it is as much our *Duty*, tho' perhaps not so *easy*, to abstain from them. If the *Difficulty of performing* a Duty will discharge us from the *Obligation* the very *Notion of Religion* is destroyed, which supposes *Difficulties* and *Temptations*, and requires us to *resist* and *overcome* them. It would be as justifiable to *renounce Christianity* in a Time of *Persecution*, as to transgress a *particular Precept* of it only to avoid some present Uneasiness. Again ; if God has commanded us to be *temperate* and *chaste*, the Reasons upon which these Precepts are grounded must *always* be the *same*, because they have their Foundation in the *eternal* and *immutable Relation* of Things ; the *Nature of Man*, and the *Good of Society* ; consequently it must *always* be the *Will* of the Great Law-giver that we should observe them ; and they must at *all Times*, or *never*, be in Force. And if *we* for our present Conveniency can *suspend* the *Obligation* of a divine Precept, and act contrary to the *known Will of God*, for a *certain Time*, we may ~~do~~ it as long as we live, as it shall best suit with our Inclinations. But then is not This an absolute Renunciation of the *Dominion* of our *Creator*, and a *Subversion* of his *Authority* ? Is it possible for any Sense of *Religion* or *Duty* to subsist unless we be *ever* obliged, under *all possible* Circumstances, however *disagreeable* or *painful* to us *at present*, to conform *our* Wills to the Will of *God*. The Reader will excuse me for recalling to his Memory the Instance already given ; What would he think ? what would he do ? Should his own Servant refuse to obey him in any Instance, till he could do it without any

Difficulty or Trouble to himself? I need not surely give any Answer to this Question?

The Result of what has been said upon this Head is, That *every Part* of God's *Law* must be binding, and his *Will* is *at all Times* to be observed, or else that his *Will* can be no *Law* to us, nor have any *Effect*.

From the Doctrine of St. James thus stated, explained, and established, I shall make some seasonable and useful Deductions.

It follows from, the foregoing Doctrine, that the Notion of *Venial Sins*, professedly maintained in the Church of Rome, and but too much countenanced by the *Practice* of *Protestants*, is either very *absurd* in it self, or else very *impertinent* to the corrupt Purposes for which it is intended.

1. Do they mean by *Venial Sins* such *involuntary Transgressions* as are inseparable from the Condition of human Nature? It is very true that our Nature is imperfect, and the *best* of Men are subject to *Failings* and *Infirmities*. The *Christian Covenant* supposes them, and makes Allowances for them; accepting us upon a *general* Acknowledgment of such inadvertent Slips, and humble Supplication to GOD for his Mercy. But what then? This gives no Countenance to *Licentiousness* or *Indulgences* of any Kind. For we are required to *strive* against our Infirmities and Failings, and to *labour* after the *highest Perfection* of which we are capable. It may be only our *Misfortune* to be inclined by Constitution to a particular Sin; but it will be our *Crime*, and our *Condemnation*, if we give Way to it.

2. If by *Venial* they mean only *Pardonable*, then either *all* Sins would be venial, or *none* would be

be so, because *all* Sins are pardonable upon the Conditions of *Repentance* and *Amendment*; and no Sin is pardonable while we *continue in the Practice of it*. But,

3. The only Notion of *Venial Sins*, that can answer *any End* to the Advocates of it, must be this; that some Sins, being *in themselves of less Importance*, are *excusable*: Or, in other Words, That we may transgress some of the *less weighty Matters* of the Law, without contracting any *Guilt*, and without any Danger of *future Punishment*. And indeed this Doctrine would effectually answer their Purpose; for Men will easily persuade themselves, that those Sins, to which they are most inclined, are the *smallest*; and that those Duties, to which they are most averse, are of a *trifling Nature*; by which Means they would at once free themselves from the *Restraints of Religion*, and the *Terror of its Sanctions*.

But the Doctrine is as *absurd* as it is *wicked*. When expressed in proper Terms it means, that *some Sins are no Sins at all*, and that God *commands* what he *permits*. Men may please themselves, and amuse the ignorant, by subtle Distinctions; but there can be no *possible Medium* between *lawful* and *unlawful*, between *Guilt* and *Innocence*. Sin is the *Transgression of some Law*, or a *Deviation from the Rule of our Actions*. Either therefore our Actions *do*, or they *do not*, deviate from our Rule; unless a Line could be both strait and crooked at the same Time. The *Will of God* is this Rule or Law. Either therefore God *has*, or he has *not commanded* or *forbidden* such an Action; if he has done *neither*, the Action is of an *indifferent Nature*; but every Com-

mand and every Prohibition of God must be a *Law* to us; and every wilful *Transgression* of it is a Violation of his *Will*; and it is an idle Fancy to suppose that God will indulge us in an *obstinate Violation* of his *Will*, though in the smallest Instance, because, besides that he would thereby give up his *Dominion* and *Authority*, it is supposing God to *will*, and *not will* a Thing at the same Time.

Neither is it consistent with the *Attributes* and *Perfections* of the Divine Nature, that God should alter his Will in respect to the Precepts of the *Gospel*. Every Part of it has always been since its first Publication, and must always continue to be, till the Consummation of all Things, *indispensably* binding upon us. What we call *Moral Duties*, are as *immutable* as the *Nature* and *Relations* of Things, upon which they are grounded. They are, in their *own Nature*, fit and reasonable; and it must always be the *Will* of a *wise* and *good* Being (whatever *dispensing* Power the Church of *Rome* may claim) that *all* Creatures should, at *all Times*, act agreeably to their *Nature* and *Relation* to *other* Beings.

Lastly, it follows from this Doctrine, that what we call the *positive Duties*, such as derive their Obligation from the *positive Command* of God, are of equal Force with the *moral Duties*. The *Will* of God being the *Rule* of our Actions, and every one of his Commands being *equally Part* of his *Will*, we must be equally obliged to conform our Actions, to the utmost of our Power, to them *all*; and every wilful *Transgression* of any one of them becomes an *Immoral* Action, and contrary to the *natural Fitness* of Things.

For,

For, what can be more *immoral*, or *unfit in Itself*, than that *Creatures* should *Rebel* against the *Authority* of their *Maker*, and refuse to comply with his *Injunctions*? There is an immutable Goodness in Obedience, and immutable Turpitude in Disobedience; and therefore the *Sacraments* and *other* Parts of *Christian Worship*, in their proper *Time* and *Place*, can no more be neglected, without a direct Breach of the *Christian Law*, and a Violation of *God's Will*, than the *Moral Duties*. It is as lawful to live in the Habit of *Fornication* or *Adultery*, as in the habitual Neglect of *Baptism*, the *Lord's Supper*, and the *Assembling of ourselves together* for publick Devotions. However different they may be in their *Nature*, they agree in having the *Command* and *Authority* of *God* to enforce them, and good Reasons for their being commanded.

So, in like manner, it is with respect to the *Belief* of any *Doctrine* made known to us by *Revelation*. If *God* has sufficiently Revealed to us any *Truth* and required the *Belief* of it, our Assent to That Truth becomes a Part of the *Will* of *God*, whose Will is our *Rule of Action*; and therefore, if we wilfully refuse our *Assent*, where we have sufficient Evidence of the *Truth of Revelation*, we reject his *Authority*, and are guilty of *Disobedience*, as much as if we were guilty of any Act of *Immorality* respecting *ourselves*, or our *Neighbour*. It is *Immorality*, with respect to *God*, because it is acting contrary to the *eternal Fitness* of *Things* arising from the *Relation* we stand in to *him*, as *Creatures* to their *Creator*, as *Subjects* to their *Rightful Sovereign*.

2. I observe, in the next Place (in answer to our *Modern Unbelievers*, who are very forward to

bring a Charge of *Cruelty* against *Revelation*, for laying *unreasonable Restraints* upon human Nature) that there is no Room for any Objection against the *Christian Religion*, on account of the Terms and Conditions of it, as if they were too *rigid* to deserve the Character of a *gracious* and *merciful* Covenant.

The *Severity*, if there be any, must lie either in the *Duties themselves*, or in the *manner* in which the Observance of them is required.

Now, as to the *Duties themselves*; we may, with the Apostle, say of the *Christian Law*, that it is *holy, just, and good*. All the Adversaries of it have been driven by the mere Force of *Truth*, though in opposition to their *Principles* and *Intentions*, to bear Testimony to the Excellency of its *Morality*. Even the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, That most bitter and inveterate Enemy of *Jesus Christ*, has not only acknowledged it in the frequent Passages which he has cited from our greatest Divines, with the highest Expressions of Applause, and in the strongest Terms of Approbation; but has over and over express'd the same Sentiments in Words of *his own*: He says farther, That *should Revelation require less of us, 'twould be an imperfect Rule*.

It is true indeed, that, with regard to *Christian Institutions* and *Doctrines*, he does inveigh in the most pompous and elaborate Manner against the *Tyranny* of imposing such *arbitrary* Precepts upon us; but can these Writers make any Man of Sense believe, that the *real* Quarrel against *Christianity* is for the sake of some few *speculative Points*, (as they term them) the two *Sacraments*, and the other Parts of *Christian Worship*? Were its *Moral* Precepts less pure and *strict*, were its

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Sanctions less terrible, their Anger would soon be appeased, when they could pursue their present Pleasures without Controul, without Remorse, or foreboding Apprehensions?

Then, as to the *Manner* in which these Duties are required. I have proved, that if a *less strict* Observance of them were exacted from us, the *Gospel* must lose the Force of a *Law*, and leave every Man to the Guidance of his *own Appetites* and *Inclinations*, because a Liberty to *dispense* with the Performance of *any one* duty, either *wholly*, or for a *certain Time*, must imply the same Power of *dispensing* with *all* the Duties of Religion, for as long a Time as we please; and an *obstinate* Transgression of *one Part* of a *Law* is a *virtual* Renunciation of the *Authority* of the *Lawgiver*, as much as a Transgression of the *whole Law*.

3. From hence therefore I proceed to another Deduction, naturally following from the preceding Observations and Arguments, and very seasonable at this Time, by way of Caution against the Artifices of the *Deists*. Their Pretences of *freeing* Mankind from *Tyranny* and *Slavery* are as popular and captivating, as they are fallacious and disingenuous. They would willingly *be thought* to allow that all the *Moral Duties* and *great Truths* of Religion are discoverable by the *Light* of Nature, and *obligatory* without any *external Command*; I say, they would willingly *be thought* to allow it, because they not only *acknowledge* and *assert* it, but they *argue* from hence against the *Expediency*, and consequently against the *actual Truth* of *Revelation*. But were those Men sincere in the Profession, and regular in the

Practice of *Natural Religion*, they would have no sufficient Temptation to reject *Christianity* because they would still remain under the same Restraints and Apprehensions, which are the great Stumbling-block of Offence, and the true Cause of their Uneasiness. If the Duties of *Natural Religion* be (as they themselves are forced to allow) the same which are taught by the Gospel; and if the Great Truths concerning the Being of a God a Providence and a future State be necessary in order to support the Practice of those Duties (as they most certainly are), they will be no considerable Gainers by their Infidelity; they part with all the Advantages of Revelation, without any proportionable Recompence for so great a Loss. For, if they be Men of Probity, if they mean what they profess, if they really intend to hearken to the Voice, and obey the Dictates of uncorrupted Reason, they must, upon their own Principles, be as virtuous in every Instance of Morality, as if they were Christians; Uncleanliness, Fraud Drunkenness and other favourite Vices being as much prohibited by their allow'd System of *Natural Ethics*, as they are by Christ; and a wilful Indulgence in any Vice being utterly inconsistent with any Principles of Religion whatsoever. So that whoever listens to the *Deistical* Proposals, upon an Expectation of being set loose from the strict Precepts and Conditions of Christianity, and from the dreadful Apprehension of a future Judgment, let him first calmly consider whether he can reconcile downright Atheism to his sober and cool Thoughts; for, if he be a Man of Understanding and serious Reflection, when he has thrown off Revelation he must go on to throw off *Natural Religion* too, before he can make him-

himself tolerably easy in the free Enjoyment of his Pleasures. This is true, not only in *Speculation*, but in *Fact*. Both in the *Writings* and *Conversation* of those who would pass for *Deists*, the Mask will drop off, or they think it proper to take it off sometimes, and shew their *real Face*, hoping to draw Disciples after them by the Beauty and Comeliness of it. I confess, it is my Opinion, (and, I think, I have good Grounds for it) that there is scarce such a Person in the *Christian World* as a *true Deist*; by which I mean, *one who disbelieves REVELATION after a diligent and impartial Examination of the Evidence on both Sides of the Question, yet retains a firm Belief of Natural Religion, and resolves, to the utmost of his Power, to live up to the Duties of it.* This, in a Country where *Christianity* is the Religion *established*, and the Religion of *Mens younger Years*, is a mere *Chimerical Character*. Men do not overcome the *Prejudices of Education* and the *Force of receiv'd Opinions* by the Strength of cool Conviction from better Information, and afterwards turn *Libertines* because they have discovered that *Religion* is a *Cheat*; but they first grow loose in their *Morals*, and then set themselves against Religion because it is a *Restraint* upon Inclination, and disturbs the *Quiet* of their Minds. This being the Case, they stop short of the Mark unless they go farther than *Deism*. They want *more Liberty* than *right Reason* will allow them; to follow the Impulse of their *Passions* in an *unrestrained Course of Indulgence*, and to rid themselves of the Fears of a *future Reckoning*. If *Precepts* must domineer over *Appetite*, human Nature is still under the *Yoke of Tyranny*. If an Order of Men must be appointed to bind on this heavy

heavy Yoke, by *teaching* and *enforcing* those Precepts, what is this but *Priestcraft*? If *Gentlemen* must be continually haunted by the Thoughts of an *after-punishment* what is This but *intolerable Superstition*? *Restraint* and *Fear* will not change their Nature by changing *Revealed* for *Natural Religion*: Nothing will answer their Purpose but an entire Removal of the *Effects*, by removing the *Cause*, viz. *Religion in General*. Were it not beside the Intention of this Discourse, I could easily shew, by Quotations from their Books, that these seeming Advocates for *Natural Religion* mean nothing less than living according to the Rules of it. Their Catalogue of *Virtues* is as short as their *Creed*. The *Relation of Things*, so often the Subject of their Encomiums, means no more than the Relation between their *Desires* and the *Objects* of them; and their *Fitness of Things* signifies only the Fitness of *gratifying their Desires* in the most agreeable and extensive Manner. But I shall mention one particular, *habitual* Practice, wherein they act in a flagrant Opposition to *Moral Virtue*, and are ready enough to justify it upon all Occasions.

The *promiscuous* Use of Women, or *such a Commerce* with them as is contrary to the *declared Sense* and *established Laws* of our Country, must be a Breach of the *Moral Law* if there be such a Thing as *Morality*, or *Virtue*. I am fully convinced that *Matrimony*, as settled by the *Christian Religion* and by the *Constitution* of our Country, will better secure the *common Happiness* of Society, than *any other* Method whatsoever. But at present I have no Occasion to enter into any Debate with them upon That Head. It can admit of no Dispute, whether the Wisdom of the *private*
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Members of a Society ought not to submit to the *publick* Wisdom of the *Legislature*. There can be no such Thing as *Society* without such a Submission. Hardy as these Advocates for *Licentiousness* are they'll scarce offer to say, that the Order and Happiness of Society cannot subsist upon the *Matrimonial* Scheme; and whether a *greater Liberty* would not, in their Opinion, be more *expedient*, as well as more agreeable to their *Inclinations*, is not the Question. It is the Business, not of the *Governed*, but of the *Governors*, to determine Matters of *Expediency*. If they can persuade the *Legislature* to declare for *Infidelity*, they'll have then an Opportunity and a Right, to offer their Opinion and their Reasons; but while the Wisdom and the Laws of the *Nation* are against them they are obliged (if there can be an Obligation in the *Nature* and *Reasons* of Things) to conform to them. If their corrupt Imaginations and debauched Manners make them impatient under the Restraint of those Laws to which they are subject, they have no Remedy but removing into some other Country, where the Laws will be more indulgent to them. While they think fit to receive the Protection and Benefit of any Government, they ought to submit to the *established Rules* of it. To live in an avow'd Violation and Contempt of *Authority*, This is not *Liberty*, but *Licentiousness*; not *Deism*, but an *Apostacy* from *Order*, from the *eternal Fitness* of Things, from *common Reason* and *common Sense*.

If it be objected (for they are not ashamed of this weak Argument) that these Inclinations being implanted in our Natures by God, Men have a natural Right to the Indulgence of them, and that
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no Power can take away a Right which is founded in our *very Beings* ; I answer, that those Inclinations may be *regulated*, so as to make the Gratification of them, in *particular* Persons, most conducive to the Good of Mankind in general. Men are naturally subject to *Hunger* and *Thirst*, which must give them a Right to *eat* and *drink* ; but, if the Good of the Society should require it, it is lawful to prescribe Rules in respect to the *Manner* and *Measure* of their eating and drinking. So, in respect to *Concupiscence*, tho' it must be lawful to gratify those Desires which are *natural* and *necessary*, yet surely our *Creator*, or (if *he* has not interposed) *human* Authority may direct, without offering *Violence* to our Natures, in what *Manner*, and under what *Restrictions*, they are to be indulged. As no Man has a *natural Right* to eat and drink *as much* as he can get down, whenever he has an Inclination, or wherever he can meet with Meat and Drink ; neither has any Man a *Right*, though a corrupted Imagination may create an *Inclination*, to a *promiscuous* and *arbitrary* Use of Women, such as shall agree best with his particular Temper. The utmost that these Gentlemen can make out, is, that every Man has a *natural Right* to *one* Woman, provided he will take her *for Life*, and be contented with her ; but his Right can extend no farther amongst *us*, whether *Revelation* be true, or not, because This is the particular *Manner* and *Measure*, which the Authority of the *Legislature* has prescribed to That Passion.

But there is another Objection that I must take Notice of, for the Commonness of it, tho' it is really so trifling that I should otherwise be ashamed to think it worth mentioning.

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There are some who pretend, that while they confine themselves to *one* Woman, they answer the *End* of the *Institution*, and of the *Laws*, though the *Ceremony* (which is only *Matter of Form*) be omitted. No; they neither come up to the *Letter* of the Law, nor answer the *Intention* of it. They have neither the *Form*, nor the *Essence* of *Matrimony*. Such a *Cobabitation* is only *durante bene placito*, during Pleasure; that is, till the Gentleman grows weary of his Companion, or meets with a more agreeable one; but *Matrimony* is a *strict Engagement* between two Parties to live together, and to be true to one another, *for Life*. Such a *Contract*, if there really be any in the *other Case*, is *private* and *precarious*; but the very *Intention* of the Law in *This* is to make the *Contract* *publick*, and to *secure* the Performance of it.

Besides, tho' every *particular Form* be in itself a Matter of an indifferent Nature, yet it is not indifferent whether there be *any stated publick Form*, or not. The Nature of the Thing requires thus much; and Obedience to Government obliges every Member to observe the *appointed Form*. Is it no Crime, no Breach of their *Moral Law*, to disobey the Laws of their *Country*?

I have mentioned This particular Vice of *Fornication* because I take it to be the most general and prevailing Cause of *Infidelity*. It is too plainly prohibited by *Christianity* to be evaded by the Help of Sophistry, and too dear a Favourite to be discarded. But *Christianity* is not the *only* Obstruction to this darling Vice. They must not only reject the *Gospel*, but get the *Laws* of their *Country* repealed; they must bid open *Defiance*,

fiance, not only to *Jesus Christ*, but to the *Civil Authority*, before they can justify, or wilfully continue in the Habit of a Practice prohibited by *both*, without acting contrary to the *Law of Reason*.

The *Deists*, as they affect to be called, being so very industrious to propagate their Opinions, and make Profelytes, I was willing to lay hold of This Opportunity of detecting their Pretences, and shewing the true Tendency of their Principles, that the younger, or more unthinking, Part of Mankind may know whether their *Attheistical* Guides are leading them; for nothing can be more evident, than that they must run with their Leaders to the *same Excess of Riot*, if they mean to procure the *Liberty* which their lawless Appetites require. *Natural Religion* will be too troublesome to those who think *Christianity* a heavy Yoke. And when People are going to be seduced by the cunning Craftiness of *Infidels*, or deluded by the false Suggestions of their own corrupt Hearts, the utter Ruin of many of them might be prevented if they would but ask themselves a few short Questions. I am inclined to disbelieve the *Christian Religion*; but what is my *real Inducement*? Have I *fairly and honestly*, without any *Bias* or *Prepossession*, examined into the Evidence for the Truth of it, and found it insufficient to induce a *rational Conviction*? Is it not rather an *Unwillingness* to believe that occasions my *Disbelief*? Do I sincerely intend to live a *good moral Life*? And do I believe those Truths of *Natural Religion*, a *God* that *Governs* and will *judge* the World, without which the *Law of Morality* will want a Sanction sufficient to enforce it? On the contrary, Do I not allow my-

self *Liberties* that are as repugnant to my *sober Reason* and the *Laws of Society* whereof I am a Member, as to *Revelation*? And do I not fly to *Infidelity* as the only Refuge from the *Remorse* and *Reproaches* of my own Mind? If Men be not wholly lost to all *Rational* and *Manly* Sentiments, such Reflections must have their Weight. If they be resolutely determined not to live after a *reasonable* Manner they are not qualified to perform the Offices of a *sociable* Being, or capable of giving proper Security for their Behaviour; and are intitled to nothing that belongs to *Society*, but the necessary Punishment appointed for the *common Enemies* of it. Having spoken so freely upon this Head, and knowing how apt they are to charge *us* of the *Clergy* (especially those whom they stile *Highb-church* Clergy, that they may have the better Pretence, and more Scope, for abusing them) I shall cite the Opinion of Mr. *Locke*: “ Those are not at all to
 “ be tolerated who deny the Being of a *God*.
 “ Promises, Covenants, and Oaths, which are
 “ the Bonds of human Society, can have no
 “ Hold upon an *Atheist*. The taking away a
 “ *God*, but in Thought, dissolves *all*. Besides
 “ also, they who by their *Atheism* undermine
 “ and destroy *all Religion*, can have no Pretence
 “ of Religion, whereupon to challenge the Privi-
 “ lege of a Toleration.”

I shall now apply myself in a few Words to *Christian* Readers; many of whom are much more concerned in the Application of the preceding Discourse, than they may imagine; if not for holding, *professedly*, any erroneous Opinions concerning *Indulgences* and *Dispensations*; if not for rejecting, with the *Deists*, the Observance of *positive*

sitive Institutions and the Belief of the *Christian Mysteries*; yet for living *habitually* in *Opposition* to plain Precepts, and *omitting* plain Duties. Various are the Instances of a *partial* Obedience, because various are the *Passions* and *Inclinations* of Mankind. Very ready are they to practise those Duties which agree with their *natural Temper*, and are not inconsistent with their *present Views in Life*: But deaf to instruction, however reasonable; to Admonition and Reproof, however gentle; to Exhortation, however moving; when the *Preacher*, or the *Writer*, undertake to dissuade them from the Enjoyment of a *beloved Vice*, or excite them to the Practice of *disagreeable* and *irksome* Duties. The Practice of *Meekness* is no difficult Virtue, where the Texture of the Blood and the Disposition of the Spirits conspire to give That Frame and Cast of Mind. Attendance upon *publick Devotions* and the Duties of the *Closet*, to those who have but little Employment and as little Taste for the Diversions of the World, are no hard Task, but rather an Amusement to the Mind satiated with Idleness, and tired with having nothing to do. But tell the *Indolent*, that the Service of his Country requires him to *take Pains*, and endure *hard Labour*; the *Greedy Worldling* and the *Voluptuary*, that the Business and Pleasures of *This Life* must sometimes give Way to the Concerns of *another*; the *Soft* and *Meek-spirited*, that he must *rouze* and *exert* himself in Defence of *Religion*, against a *Confederacy* of Enemies; your Arguments will have but little Force, because you argue against *Inclination*, against *Constitution*, against *Nature*, or *Habits*. The *Indolent* will be *indolent still*, contenting himself with doing *no Hurt*, though
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he wilfully neglects the Opportunity of *doing Good*; the *Worldling* will be a *Worldling still*, under the Cloak of *Industry*, and a *prudent Care* for himself and Family; the *Coward* will be a *Coward still*, though you endeavour to animate him by every proper Motive, persuading himself that his Want of *Courage* and *Zeal* is *Meekness* and *Humility*. The *Drunkard* would willingly commute for his *Intemperance* by *Generosity* and *Good-nature*: The *Fornicator*, for his *Unclean-ness* by some Acts of *Charity*, which are to cover the Multitude of his beloved Sins: The *Miser* will willingly be *temperate*, because he has no Inclination to the *opposite Vice*; or perhaps, because he does not care to be at the *Expence* of it: The *Ambitious* Man will readily observe any Duties that won't interfere with his *political Views*, because the Lust after *Honour* and *Power* being the predominant Passion of his Soul, there is no *Self-denial* in the Practice of other Duties. But try to persuade the *Drunkard* to forsake his *Bottle*, the *Miser* to be *liberal*, the *Unclean* Person to be *chaste*, the *Ambitious* to forego an Opportunity of recommending himself to the favour of a *Court* by *indirect Means*; by *Injustice*, by *Cruelty*, by *Opposition*; and *Irreligion*; demonstrate ever so clearly that they are acting in a flagrant Opposition to the Direction of God's Law, they'll still go on steadily in the Pursuit of their several Views, and Gratification of their particular Affections, trusting to the Efficacy of their Observance of the *other* Parts of the Law, tho' they wilfully and habitually offend in *one Point*. But the *Perfection*, shall I say? or rather the very *Nature* and *Essence* of Virtue, consists in *rectifying* the *Irregularities*, and *subduing* the *Predominancy*

of our Passions, so as to reduce them to an Obedience to the Commands of God. If we act upon a true Principle of *Love* and *Duty* to him, we shall make *his Will*, not our *own Inclination*, the Rule of our Actions; and if we observe his Precepts only in those Instances which are agreeable to *our selves*, we reject his Government. And therefore, if we be in *earnest* in Religion, we shall strictly observe the *natural* or *habitual Bent* of our Hearts, our most favourite and prevalent Passions; have a watchful Eye over ourselves in those Points, and honestly and heartily endeavour to subject them to our Duty. For however we may flatter our own Inclination, or impose upon the World by some outward Appearances, the Doctrine of St. James will, at the Day of Judgment, to their Confusion, be found true, That *whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit Adultery, said also, Do not Kill: wherefore, if thou commit no Adultery, yet, if thou Kill, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law.*

OF

OF

PROVIDENCE.

PART I.

Mr. Hooker,

THERE is no Contemplation more amazing, awakening, curious, and entertaining, than that of God's various Dispensations to Mankind. We are not, I own, equal to the infinite Search, but we are allowed to see enough to raise our Wonder, and allay our Thirst of Enquiry. The great Ruler of the World has declared his Ways to be equal; but Man's Ways are not equal, his Sight is short, his Opinions fanciful, and his Judgments unsettled. Hence Men are apt to confine the every where existing Deity to some Corner of the World; they figure him, as they would have him, immoderately fond of *Them*, but not able, or not willing to cast his Eye of Benevolence on the rest of Mankind. Hear an old *Grecian*, who treats the Inhabitants of other Countries as *Barbarians*, and not of the same Species with himself, and you will perceive his *Jupiter*, or his *Minerva*, profuse in Wonders for the Safety and Glory of *Greece*, but negligent of the Interests of the Bulk of Mankind. The *reputed Barbarian*, in the mean time, has his God that smiles and his Sun

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that shines only on him, and those with whom he converses. Turn to the *Jew*, blown up with his Privileges and boasting of his Advantages above all other Nations and Kindreds, and you will find him claiming *Abraham*, the Father of many Nations, as the Father of *his* Nation only, to which no one can belong who will not be favoured by Heaven, and from which no one can be an Alien who will not be unhappy. I wish, I could stop here, and could not say, that we have some Sects among *Christians* under the same Mistake: Who shape out a Deity as partial and limited as any of the former, giving the Means of Grace to some, and refusing them to all others; making Heaven and the Glories of it the Inheritance of a selected few, and Hell and its Torments the Portion of the rest; and this Antecedent to their Birth, and without any Regard to what they shall or can do. Nay, could we read the Hearts of Men, I might be justified in asserting, that each particular Person, by the like Prejudice in Favour of himself and those related to him, is too apt to think of God, as the God of *his* Family, tied to promote the Interests of it, though ever so much to the Disadvantage of the rest of his Creatures. He can fancy, there is That Mercy for *him* which he would not allow for others in the like Case; and, though the Almighty cuts off his Neighbours for their Offences, yet that he will see so much in him as not to use him in the same Manner. Hence arise confident Hopes of Happiness, without performing the Conditions of it: Hence Murmurs for all the Good that goes beside him, and all the Evil that befalls him: Hence groundless Presumption, and as groundless Despair. For, as all right Notions
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of the Deity have an Influence to better our Practice, so all false ones have a Tendency to corrupt it. It is therefore of the last Consequence to correct these erroneous Conceptions, and reduce Men to a right and worthy Notion of God, who, in all his various Distributions here and hereafter, is always wise, always just, always good, and that, to all his Creatures.

If I might chuse a Thesis to proceed upon in this Enquiry, it should be, *that with God is no Respect of Persons.* The Word *Persons* marked out those Masks of Disguise on the old Stage, which the Actors spoke through and wore, and by the Help of which they appeared young or old, handsome or otherwise, of this or that Condition or Country, according to the Parts they had to represent. The *real* Man lay behind these Vizors, and was not the Younger or Older, the better or worse, for his Appearance, but as he acted his Part. Hence in Life, the Word *Person* comes to denote all that is *without* the Man, and *foreign* to him, in Opposition to those *internal* moral Qualities, those *real* Virtues, which distinguish the Man in the Eye of all good Judges. The Proposition then is, that nothing *accidental* to a Man, nothing exclusive of his own Acquirements, sets any Value upon him in the Sight of God. His Nation, his Birth, his Condition, his Sex, his natural or supernatural Endowments of Body or Mind, considered separate from the Use of them, from Piety, from Faith, from Holiness; these are the Things without the Man, which have more Appearance than Reality, give no true Merit to the Possessor, being liable to be abused to the worst, as well as used to the most excellent Purposes. To be a *Greek* or a *Barbarian*, born in *Asia* or *Europe*,

sprung from a noble or ignoble House, to be Poor or Rich, dressed in Purple or Rags, Strong or Weak, Knowing or Ignorant, make nothing towards obtaining his Favour and Regard, with whom there is neither *Jew* nor *Greek*, Bond or Free, Male or Female, Circumcision or Uncircumcision; but Regeneration, the new Creature, the sincere Endeavour, under the Means allowed, after Virtue and Goodness. Men, indeed, often regulate their Esteem of Men, and their good Will towards them, by their Circumstances and Appearance: What is great, glittering, loud, and attended, attracts the Eye, pleases the Fancy, inspires Reverence Desire and Respect. But it is not so with God: All the Distinctions of Power and Grandeur disappear before him: He enters within this Pagantry, and sees and esteems the Man, as he really is. It is not only an Attachment to the Things of the World which makes Men esteem and value others according to the foreign and accidental Advantages; but Fear and Interest have a Share in this Judgment: This introduces Dependence on those that are above us in Fortunes or Power, and this is followed by Esteem and Respect. Men's Persons are had in Admiration because of Advantage. But these Considerations can have no Place in God, who is seated as far beyond Obligation from the most mighty Man, as he is from Possibility of Error and Mistake about him. This then is the first Particular, in which God appears to be no Respector of Persons; viz. in his not entertaining a greater or less Value and Esteem of any one, on the Score of what is outward and accidental to him.

* Nothing seems more to contradict God's equal Proceeding, than the Distribution of the Goods
and

and Evils of Life; and yet, if we take in the whole of Man's Existence, nothing perhaps admits it more. The World is his great Family, and if we look thoroughly and attentively into it, we shall find the Hand of Providence dispensing its Favours with proper Regard to all Cases, and, like his own Sun, shining on every Part of it. Consider Mankind, either as sorted into Societies, or in the Individuals which compose them, and a wonderful Equality and Impartiality will appear in all the Dispensations towards them. It is true, the Almighty Sovereign, in Compliance with the Order which he set himself at the Creation, to keep up the different Relations among Men, and give Room for the respective Duties arising from them, has diversified his Bounty, and with beautiful Variety divided his Favours to Bodies of Men and single Persons. To one he has given one Talent, to a second another: To one he has given Health, to another Wisdom, to this Man Strength, to that Beauty, to a third Wealth: All have not all, all have not the same Advantages; That all may depend on and love each other, all equally happy, perhaps here, more likely hereafter, if they all alike improve in Proportion to their Abilities. And as it is with single Persons, so also with Bodies Politick. One Nation has Courage, another Arts and Sciences; one Country has Fruits, another has Shipping; one Region its Pastures, another its Metals: All have not all, all have not the same Commodities; that Commerce may be maintained, Advantages communicated, and mutual Love spread itself as wide as the Earth. Thus far therefore we behold the Creator impartially beneficent to all his Creatures.

Proceed we then further to examine, to admire his Conduct. There is observed in the World as great Variety in the Quantity of good Things distributed among Men, as in the Sorts of them. Some have more, some have less: One has ten Talents, one two, and another one. This Man has a great Share of the Goods of Life, and that as great of the Evils of it: One is rich, another Poor; one in Health, another in Sickness; one smiling in Prosperity and Ease, another tortured with Agony and Pain. These are seeming Inequalities, I confess, but even these upon Examination may lessen, may cease. For every Condition of Life has its secret Pleasures and secret Disquiets, its inward Supports and inward Pains, which we cannot possibly know, and which, if known, might set Mankind more upon the Level, than they seem to be. Happiness is seated in the Mind, and may be where we least suspect it, and may not be where we are most apt to imagine it. But in order to clear up all Cases, we must take in the whole Scheme of Providence, and look on this Life, as it really is, a Passage to a better, a Stage of Trial, Probation, and Stewardship, to be followed by an Eternity of Happiness or Misery, with exact Degrees of each in Proportion to the Degrees of Virtue or Vice in every Man. In this View then, if one has ten Talents, he has ten Times the Work to do of him that has but one: For to whom much is given, of him much will be required. If he has done more than the other, he shall be more plenteously rewarded; if on the other Hand he fails in his Duty, his Portion must be so many the more Stripes. The Man in the mean time with one Talent, who did what he could, shall enter with him into the Joy of his Lord.

Lord. He that worked but one Hour, if That were the only Hour he had to work in, shall be paid like him who bore the Burden and Heat of the Day. If great be the Advantages of him that had much, great also appear his Disadvantages: If little the Trust, less the Danger. The Things, called Good and Evil in Life, are no further so than as they set us forward or hinder us in the Way to another: And in this Light, there is nothing, but Sin, evil under the Sun. Riches and Poverty, Health and Sickness, Ease and Pain, are all good: Good, as they promote their respective Virtues; good, as they are Means to bring us to Happiness. If the rich Man has more Pleasure, he is also in more Danger; if the poor Man has more Disquiet, he is less likely to forget where he is going. If the Man of Fortune has his Virtues of Benevolence and Generosity to carry him to Heaven, the Man with nothing has his Submission and Contentedness, which will as securely waft him thither. Pain can be resigned, as well as Ease can be thankful and compassionate: And if there be more of present Dissatisfaction and Difficulty in the Duties of some Stations of Life, there is more of Glory reserved for them. Those who have many Means of Grace, and those who have few, shall be happy, if they use what they have. They who have many Temptations are not worse dealt with than they that have few, if God always with the Temptation makes a way to escape it. Thus the Things of the World are distributed with an Impartial Bounty, though all have not the same Sorts or Proportions of them, when we carry our Eye to the End of Things, and consider Man in the whole of his Existence. In whatever State of

Life

Life any Man is thrown he may consider himself in a Post exactly suited to his Ability: He may see present Difficulties made up with future Advantages, Labour with Reward, painful Duties with shining Virtues and excelling Glories, and say, of a Truth God is no Respector of Persons in his Distribution of the Goods of Nature or Grace.

Again—Not less impartial is the Sovereign of the World in the Acceptance of the Services of his Creatures, than he is in the Dispensation of Good to them. In the first Age of the World God had Respect to the Offering of *Abel*, and rejected that of *Cain*; but the Cause of it appears from what the Lord said to *Cain*—Why art thou wroth? and why is thy Countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, Sin lieth at the Door: And unto thee shall be his Desire, and thou shalt rule over him. It was not then the *Person* of *Cain* that caused his Rejection, but his not doing well, his Sin, whatever it were. It is through the Merits of Christ that God accepts the imperfect Services of Men: He will therefore accept the Offerings, not only of some, but of all Men; since Christ died, not for some only, but for all Men. As by the Offence of one Judgment came upon all Men to Condemnation; even so by the Righteousness of one, the free Gift came upon all Men unto Justification of Life. All Men therefore, who endeavour under the Means afforded to please God, are looked on in *Christ Jesus*, and in him will be accepted. The *Jews*, indeed, were under great Mistakes, as to this universal Benevolence of God to all Mankind: Favoured above other Nations with Revelations and temporal Blessings, they fondly engrossed God to themselves, and made him the
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God of the *Jews* only. But God had declared himself otherwise by many Examples, recorded in the Bible, of his Acceptance of *Melchizedec* the *Canaanite*, *Job* the *Idumean*, *Jethro* the *Madianite*, and others that might be mentioned: And more clearly by his Prophets, who expressly foretold the Calling of the *Gentiles*, the Acceptance of other Nations, and the Rejection of the *Jewish* for their Sins: And still most evidently by the preaching of the Gospel, which is directed to all, designed for all, and lets us fully into the Mystery of God's Dealing with Mankind in every Age. The great Sovereign of the World raises one People, and depresses another; sends out his Revelations and Commands to this Country sooner, to that later; but still with an Eye to this unerring Rule of Conduct, to accept every Man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. Sincerity and Goodness engage his Favour in every Nation, under every Dispensation. *Cornelius* was a *Gentile*, at the Time when the *Jews* were the outwardly favoured People of God: Was he not therefore accepted, when he was devout and charitable? The sacred History assures us, he was, and that his Prayers and Alms went up for a Memorial before God, a Friend of Virtue, in whatever Circumstances he beholds it. Upon the same Consideration, many, as was foretold, have, and many shall come from the *East*, from the *West*, from the *North* and from the *South*, and shall sit down with *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, in the Kingdom of God, while the Children of the Kingdom shall for Impenitence be shut out.

Lastly, the impartial Equity, observed in the Acceptance of the Services of Men, shall be followed

lowed in God's Judgment of them at the last Day. There will be one Judge of all, the same Justice, the same Tribunal, the same Manner of Proceeding. Nor Fear, nor private Regards, nor Presents, nor Pity, shall then have any Place. An Account will then be taken of how much every Man received, and how much he has gained by Trading: Then shall the Matters be adjusted between him that had ten Talents, and him that had but five. All Things shall be ballanced in an exact Scale, Actions with their Intentions, Difficulties, Circumstances, Degrees, Assistances, Disadvantages. All Evasions, Excuses, and Pretences shall vanish: More or less Light shall not be pleaded; they, who have sinned without a positive Law, shall be judged and condemned without a Law; and those, who have sinned under a Law, shall be judged by that Law; all, according to the Dispensation, they have been under. Then shall be Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that does Evil, *Jew* as well as *Gentile*; but Glory, Honour, and Peace, to every one that does well, without Exception of *Jew* or *Greek*. This is the Picture of the last Day's Judgment, which God has discovered to us; and can there be any more free from all Appearance of Injury, more clear from all Respect of Persons?

At present we see but a small Part of the vast Extent of Providence, and therefore are often puzzled about the Ways of it: But the happy Time is expected, when we shall behold every Link of that wonderful Chain, which reaches from Earth to Heaven; the Reason, the Proportion, the exact Equity of every Dispensation; when we shall survey Men rising above each other

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other in Glory as they excelled in Goodness ; but in other Respects, though amazingly diversified, yet as amazingly made equal, in their Advantages and Disadvantages, their Pains and their Pleasures, in their Lives or in their Deaths, in this World or the other. What may seem to lie in the Way of this Equality of the divine Proceeding with Mankind, shall be considered in some future Papers.

Yours, &c.

PART II.

Mr. HOOKER,

IN a former Paper I attempted to shew the Equality of God's Dealing with Men considered in the whole of their Existence : I proceed to remove what may seem to lie in the Way of it.

The Variety, observable in the Distribution of the Goods and Evils of Life, has been acknowledged : Some Methods have been, and many more may be suggested, for reconciling all this with the divine Impartiality. There is with all a Time of Joy, and a Time of Sorrow ; hidden Satisfaction, and a secret Anguish ; Advantages and Disadvantages, which we cannot weigh, because we cannot discern them, and which may bring Things nearer to Equality, than the Appearance promises. Though the Goods of Life are given to some, they are designed by the Giver
for

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for the Benefit and Use of all. The Man of Plenty is but the Depositary who is to distribute his Effects to as many as want them, who have only the easy Task to receive them and be thankful. If through the ill Conduct of Men, one has his evil Things in present, the other his good ones; this shall have his Evils, the other his Goods hereafter, in exact Proportion, and nothing in this Case makes a Difference between the two Persons, be held in the whole of their Existence, but the Difference of their Behaviour in their respective Circumstances. One is set high because he will best answer the Purposes of that Situation; another low, because it best suits his Abilities: But where is the Injury to either? If he be not raised high who so posted would certainly fall down; if he be not depressed, who would be less serviceable to the World in such a Condition? The Villain is successful, that there may be Temptation to Wickedness, and consequently Virtue to avoid it: The good Man is crossed, that he may learn to act upon higher Motives, than any this World can afford him. There is no Man so bad, but he has some Good in him; and no one so good, but he has some Alloy of Evil. The treacherous Dealer then is sometimes prosperous, that he may be rewarded for his little Goodness or be betrayed into farther Degrees of Sin, and consequently of Punishment: The good Man is often in contrary Circumstances, that he may be punished for the Evil still remaining in him, and so be made better, and become happier. What then of Inequality, if the one be rewarded for the little good Part of his Character with the slightest of Goods, those of this Life; and the other for his little Mis-carriages be punished with the slightest of Evils, those

those of this Life? Why should the afflicted good Man complain, that he is not cursed with Prosperity? The prosperous evil Man cannot, since he receives, though only in this Life, more Good than he deserves. Since then the Things of the World are of so undetermined and undiscernable a Nature; since they are Good or Evil, not according to their Appearance, but according to the Design of the Donor, and the Use of the Possessor; since what is in present Evil is often in event Good, and what is now delightful may be afterward and in its Consequence most afflicting; since Things are to be considered in their whole Extent, and there is room enough in Eternity to make up all Inequalities: We may conclude, there is no Argument to be drawn from the present Face of Things and different Conditions of Life against the divine Impartiality.

There lies a Difficulty, worthy of particular Consideration, arising from God's Election of the *Jewish* Nation to be his People, before *Christ*, and afterwards from the Gospel being communicated to some Parts of the World, whilst others lie sunk in Darkness and Error. In order to give Satisfaction, I shall divide the Objection, and examine a-part the Case of the *Jewish* Nation, and that of the Publication of the Gospel.

That God elected, chose, and separated the *Jews* from all other People; distinguished them by Favours, Revelations, Statutes, and Judgments; is a Fact too certain to be denied. The Scripture declares in a Multitude of Places that God has chosen *Jacob*, that he loved him, elected him for his Inheritance, that he gave him Laws and Ordinances, and that he hath not done so to other Nations. Why should the equal Father of all Nations

Nations thus shew himself particular to this? It was not on Account of the superior Virtue of That People: For *Moses* expressly cautions them against such a Conceit, when he says, *the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good Land to possess it for thy Righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked People.* Neither was it for their being more in Number than any other People, or the like outward and accidental Considerations: For the same Author assures them, *they were the fewest of all People.* What was it then for? The Prophet tells us and them, it was to perform the Word which the Lord sware unto their Fathers, *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.* Now the Promise made to them, respected the *Messiah, the Christ, That Seed* in which all the Nations of the Earth were to be blessed. This then was the Case: •God, upon the Fall of Man, resolved out of his gracious Mercy to redeem him, and put him again into a State of Salvation: To this Purpose he promised a Saviour of the World, That Seed of the Woman which should break the Serpent's Head. For wise Reasons, This Redeemer was not to appear till a certain Period, called therefore the *Fullness of Time.* Faith in God's Promises, as far as they were revealed, was the appointed Means of Salvation to all Mankind. Men were not intended to be forced to believe, but to be led to it by rational Arguments, the Cords of a Man, that there might be Virtue in it. To furnish these rational Arguments, the Saviour of the World was not to come in all his heavenly Glory, such as would carry irrefragable Conviction with it; but he was to be revealed in the Infirmary of human Flesh with still Marks enough of Divinity about him, that all, who saw or heard of him, might know

know him. Some of these Marks were the Completion of the Prophecies, which went before him; according to which his Nation, his Country, his Family were pointed out. Agreeably to this Scheme, God was pleased to call *Abraham*, and, having tried and found him faithful, to promise, that from him should come the Saviour of the World: And that there might be no Mistake, he limited his general Promise to his Seed of *Isaac*, and the *Jewish* Nation sprung from him; and in process of Time to one Family of that People, the House of *David*. In order therefore to keep up and preserve these Marks, by which the World were to distinguish their Saviour at his appearing, he selected the *Jewish* Nation, revealed himself to them, suffered them not to mix with other Nations, gave them Sacraments and Ordinances of Discrimination, and taught them to keep an exact Distinction of Families and Relations. Therefore when the *Messiah* was come, and there was no farther Need of them, these Distinctions between *Jew* and *Gentile* were abolished, and the Partition Wall was thrown down; which plainly shews, for what End it was built. The Favours then to the *Jewish* People, being only intended to make known to the World their Saviour and Redeemer, were Benefits designed, not only for *Them*, but for all Mankind, who had a Right in this Redemption. God was not, in this seeming Partiality of Dispensation, consulting the Good of one People, but of all Mankind. God, in order to bring about the Righteousness of Faith, having resolved that the *Messiah* should be known by his Country, his Place of Birth, his Family, his Nation, why might not the Country of *Judea*,

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the Town of *Bethlehem*, the House of *David*, the *Jewish* Nation, be chosen for this Purpose, as well as any other? What if the *Jews* in this Case were outwardly favoured, selected, and distinguished above other Nations; since they were all the while only Depositories of a Treasure, the Advantage of which would extend, and was designed so to do to all Mankind, as well as themselves, on the same Terms?

If it be here asked what Advantage then had the *Jews*? I answer, with the Apostle, much every Way. They were prospered, defended, enriched; and the Oracles of God were intrusted to them. But still these were temporal Advantages, outward Means of Grace, of which God gives more or less according to his Wisdom and Pleasure; because these are such Things as are good or bad to the Possessor, as he shall make use of them. The *Hebrews* were brought into the Land, and other Nations cut off from it; but not till these Nations had filled up the Measure of their Iniquity, and were to be ejected by some Body or other. The *Jews* were successful, and their Neighbours not so: Were they therefore happier upon the whole for this? No—through their Sins they were not, they grew wanton with Prosperity, and multiplied their Plagues still seven Times more. Great were their Advantages, but great their Duties also, proportionably great their Dangers. Other People had fewer Discoveries and Laws, but then they had fewer Transgressions too: For Sin is not imputed, where there is no Law. God had a Purpose, to shew all Mankind their Weakness and the Necessity of a Mediator and Faith in him for Acceptance. Accordingly he left most Nations to the Lights which

which Nature could afford them, assisted by Tradition from *Noah* : To one People he made a fuller Discovery of himself and gave a positive Law. What was the Issue? The Apostle informs us, where he says, he has proved both *Jews* and *Gentiles* all under Sin, and consequently unable to help themselves to Happiness and the Favour of God, and therefore that all must have it by God's Mercy through the Merits of *Christ*. And this was the Design of God's different Dispensations to them. The humble, the believing *Jew* who owned his Weakness, did what he could, and then betook himself to the Divine Mercy, was looked on with Favour by the God of the *Jews* : The humble and believing Heathen, who did the like to the utmost of his Power, was likewise in the Favour of the same God, who is not the God of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*. One had more, one had less Information, Assistance, and Advantage. But see the righteous Decision of the Matter in the last Scene of Things, when as many as have sinned without Law shall also perish without Law, and as many as have sinned in the Law shall be judged by that Law.

This Part of the Difficulty being removed, I proceed to the other concerning the *Gospel*; which may resolve itself into the three following Enquiries.

First, Why the Gospel, which is the Power of God to Salvation, was not published to one Nation, as well as another, to all People, since the Benefits of it were intended for all.

Secondly, Why in those Places, where the Gospel has been communicated, it was revealed to one sooner than to another.

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Thirdly,

Thirdly, Why it was offered to some People with greater Evidence of Miracles, than to others.

The first Enquiry is, why the Gospel, intended for the Benefit of all, was not published to one Nation, as well as another. I answer, it may be the honest Use of the Light afforded in one Place and the Abuse of it in another which have occasioned this Difference of Dispensation towards them, Since the Preachers of the Gospel are forbidden to cast their Pearl before Swine that would rend them for the Favour; since it is there recorded, that he who uses his little shall have more, and he who does not, shall be deprived of what he had. If this Account of the Matter be not sufficient, by Reason of the many Intimations, that God, in calling a Nation and giving them the Knowledge of his Ways, has Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and that it is not of him that will-eth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy; then the Case is no other than that of raising one People and depressing another, affording the outward Means of Grace in more Abundance to this Country, than to That, which God may certainly do without being partial to either, provided he requires no more of either than what they can perform, and will give Happiness to both if they do what they can: Which the Scripture no where says, he will not, and Reason and some Parts of Scripture incline us to think, he will.

But after all perhaps the Fact in the Objection is not true. There are many Reasons to persuade us, the Gospel has been published to all the Countries of the World some Way or other. This appears to have been our Saviour's Intention, when he said to his Disciples, *Go ye into all the World,*

World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature. And the Apostle to the Romans seems to assert that this was done, or was to be done accordingly—Whoſoever ſhall call upon the Name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved. The Objector replies to this—*How ſhall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how ſhall they believe in Him in whom they have not heard? How ſhall they hear without a Preacher? And how ſhall they preach, unleſs they be ſent?* The Apoſtle answers—*But I ſay, have they not heard? Yes verily: Their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World.* The Acts of the Apoſtles and their Epiſtles give us a large Detail of their unwearied Diligence in ſpreading the Notices of the Gospel to a vaſt Extent in *Asia* and *Europe*: And Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory gives us an Account of the like Induſtry and Zeal in holy Men who ſucceeded them, and of whole Nations and Countries converted to the Knowledge of *Chriſt* by them. And the ſame may have happened in other Places, of which we have not heard. It is no Objection to this, that this does not appear to have been the Caſe from a preſent Survey of Mankind, great Numbers of whom ſeem to have no Footſteps of Chriſtianity left among them, ſince they may all have had the Gospel preached to them; but ſome rejected it at firſt, others received it and afterwards loſt it, their Light was extinguished, and their Candleſtick removed, becauſe they held the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs. This is agreeable to God's Method of rewarding Virtue and puniſhing Vice, the one with Knowledge of his Ways, the other with Ignorance of them. Thus the Sins of a Nation are puniſhed nationally, ſometimes with temporal Evils, ſometimes with the

Loss of Spiritual Goods ; while the Individuals and the successive Generations of that Nation are left to stand or fall, according to the Share, they have, or have not in the Sins of their Country, and according to their Use of the Means afforded.

The second Question is, why the Gospel was revealed to one Country sooner, to another later. I answer, because this Method of Proceeding was exactly agreeable to God's Method of converting the World by rational Arguments, and publishing the Gospel by the Preaching of his Ministers. One People's Refusal gave an Opportunity of turning to another ; Fitness of Times was consulted, the Gospel was offered at the Instant Men were most likely to receive it, and not offered, when the present Circumstances of the Place would not have given it Admission. The Rejection of the *Jews* caused the flowing in of the *Gentiles*, and the coming in of the *Gentiles* is to stir up the *Jews* to Jealousy. The glad Tidings were published in one City, and heard of in another, that these might be awakened and attentive, and do something to forward the Tender of Salvation. The Conversion of one Country was the very Means of converting another, and thus the Apostles and Preachers had Time to go through the World, and open their Commission to every Creature. Thus, though some had the Offers of Mercy sooner, some later, none were injured, since the Time of every Offer was the fittest Time for it. They that were called soonest had most Work, and also most Satisfaction ; they that were called latest, if they obeyed the Call, received the same Pay with those who came Hours before them into the Vineyard : Since an Account
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was taken of what each had received, and no Man was required to do more than he could.

The last Enquiry is, why the Gospel was tendered with greater Evidence of Miracles to some People, than to others. That it was so is clear from our Saviour's Saying—*Woe unto thee, Chozazin and Bethsaida; for if the mighty Works done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in Sackcloth and Ashes.* Why then were not these mighty Works done in those Places? It may be, because they did not deserve so much Grace, having abused what was hitherto allowed them: Or it may be, because such a Glare of Conviction would have forced their Assent, and not left it in their Power to do otherwise. Our Saviour in his own Country did not many mighty Works, and the Reason given is, their Unbelief. Thus Prejudice and wilful shutting of the Eyes hinder the Offer of great Light; and the Refusal of one Gift is punished with the Loss of another. Again, there may be more Obstacles to surmount in the Conversion of one Person or Place, than of another: different Degrees of Evidence in such different Circumstances may be exactly ballanced, so that he that has most may have but just enough, and he that has less may have just enough too. God sees the Abilities, and measures the Capacity of Persons, and proportions his Grace to the several Occasions for it, and may be most equal where we think him most otherwise. Signs and Wonders attended the first Dawning of the Gospel; nor could less have been of Force against the united Powers of Earth and Hell: But when many were converted, Miracles ceased with the Occasions for them, and Men were brought to believe upon

other Motives. And to set this Matter right, if there be more of Ease in believing amidst a Multitude of Evidence, there is the less of Virtue in it, and consequently of Reward. If *Thomas* was blessed because he had seen and believed, more blessed are they, our Lord himself says, who have not seen, and yet have believed. These Considerations may perhaps lead us to think that there is no just Argument against the Equality of God's Proceeding to be drawn from the Manner of his communicating the Gospel to the World, but that in this, as well as other Views, he is impartial, and no Respector of Persons.

I am, &c., Yours.

TWO

T W O
DISCOURSES,

FIRST,

Concerning the Nature of ERROR
in DOCTRINES merely Speculative.

SECOND,

Shewing that the DOCTRINE of
the TRINITY is not merely Speculative.

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A

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

The NATURE of ERROR in *Speculative* Points.

IN the following Discourse I intend to treat of *doctrinal* Points in Religion, in Answer to the loose and pernicious Notions of those who maintain the *necessary Innocency* of *Error*, or *Ignorance* in such Points. For, though they seem to allow the Necessity of believing certain Articles of *Faith*, yet they will not allow that Matters of *Doctrine*, or *Speculation* can be of that Number. What Points they will allow to be *fundamental* Articles of Faith they do not offer to declare, but by *doctrinal*, or *speculative* ones, they understand those *mysterious* Doctrines of *Christianity* relating to the divine Nature and Manner of Existence and the Method of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*; such as the Doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and several others, which I forbear to mention here, as having no immediate Relation to my Subject. This important Doctrine, tho' plainly revealed in the *New Testament*, and commonly maintained in the first and purer Ages of Christianity as generally necessary to Salvation, is yet rejected,
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because inconsistent, as is pretended, with the Principles of *Reason* and *Philosophy*. Many unsuccessful Attempts having been made by the *Socinians*, and *Arians* to defend their Heresies from *Scripture*, and *Antiquity*, they have been constantly projecting new Schemes for the Support of them. Among others, the Doctrine of the *Innocency* of *Errors* in Points of *Speculation* has been of late, though not invented, yet more fully and particularly enlarged upon, and digested into a regular Scheme. However true the Doctrine of the *Trinity* may be in itself, or how clearly soever it may be revealed in *Scripture*, yet, as it is a Matter of *Speculation* only, the Knowledge and Belief of it, it seems, do not affect our *Salvation*. It may serve, like mere *philosophical* and *metaphysical* Questions, to employ the Thoughts of the learned and inquisitive; it may serve for an Amusement in a leisure Hour, or as a Trial of Ingenuity; as an Opportunity of shewing a great deal of Reading, a rational Head, or a critical Sagacity; but the Subject, as to the Belief of it, is, in its own Nature, as indifferent as any *mathematical* Truth, and therefore cannot possibly be a *necessary* and *fundamental* Article of *Faith*.

The Foundation upon which this Objection is built, is not good, as will appear afterwards when we come to consider the Nature and Consequences of the *Christian Mysteries*, especially the most important Mystery of the *Trinity*. It is not so purely *speculative* and *abstracted* in its Nature as they would insinuate, but is immediately connected with *Practice*, as requiring certain external Actions, and those too of the Essence of true Religion, to be performed in Consequence

sequence of it; and as having a necessary Influence upon the Mind, in exciting and improving *religious Dispositions*. Indeed, it seems to me an impossible Supposition that any Truth, immediately respecting the Nature of God and his most wonderful and gracious Dispensations in the Redemption of Mankind, should be *speculative* only, if *Speculation* be opposed, as it must be, to any Influence upon the *religious Dispositions of the Mind*. But, previous to this Enquiry, I thought it might be of great Use to examine the Case of *doctrinal* or *speculative* Points of Religion, how far they are *indifferent* in their Nature, and, as such, incapable of being made *Terms and Conditions* of *Salvation*: For, to such a Persuasion it is owing that a great Number of Christians neglect the Consideration of the *essential* Doctrines of their Religion. They are prepossessed with a Notion that such Matters do not at all concern them, and then rationally enough determine not to spend their Time upon Subjects of no Consequence to their real Happiness, and as little entertaining to their Taste and Humour. But if we can convince Unbelievers, that, *were* the Articles of *Christian Faith* purely *speculative*, the Belief of them might, nevertheless, be required of us by God as necessary to a Participation of the Benefits of *Christianity*, we have gained one considerable Point upon them, by removing an Objection that lay in the Way to a proper Enquiry. As they will not be persuaded to bestow much Pains in enquiring into the Truth of useless Doctrines, the first proper Step towards their Conviction seems to be to shew, that the Belief of such Doctrines may be of the last Importance to their eternal Happiness, because required by God, how-

however *indifferent* in their own Nature. They may then the more easily be persuaded to enquire whether God has revealed them, and required the Belief of them; and such an Enquiry will as naturally shew them of what Importance the Doctrines, in Dispute between us, are to the *whole Christian Scheme*, and effective of true *Christian Dispositions*.

But the main Reason why I thought an Enquiry into the Nature of *doctrinal* or *speculative* Points seasonable is, because the *Manner* of defending the prevalent Notion concerning the *Innocency* of such *Errors*, has led the Abettors of it into very dangerous Principles, destructive of all *Faith* and *Morals*. Indeed *modern Free-thinking*, in Respect to *Religion*, resolves at last into *Deism*, but in nothing more manifestly than in the present Dispute; tho' I am willing to hope, the Consequences are not seen by every one who maintains the Principles from whence they flow. This, however, tho' it may, and ought to incline us to judge charitably of the Intention of the Authors of *heretical* Notions, yet it ought not to lessen our Industry and Zeal in endeavouring to prevent their pernicious Effects upon the Faith of others.

I shall therefore proceed to the Question in Dispute, in stating and prosecuting of which, I shall have particular Regard to a celebrated Performance, written professedly upon the Subject, under the Title of *The Innocency of Error asserted and vindicated*. This Author, as he himself declares, has *taken the utmost Care and Pains to go to the Bottom of it*, and his *Friends*, if we may judge from their avowed Character of it, and

* Written by Dr. Sykes, since made Precentor of Salisbury, and Dean of Burien.

and *his* publick Encouragement from them, espouse the Principles laid down in his Book, and seem to think, he has succeeded very well in his Design; so that in confuting *him* I may fairly be supposed to have confuted the general Sentiments of the *Party*. What *Care* the Author may have taken, he himself best knows; but it is more than my *Opinion*, that he has not gone to the *Bottom of the Question*, but only made it more difficult for others to do it for him.

ERROR, he says, *p. 3. is an Assent of the Mind to a Proposition as true, which is not so. If Error extends no further than the Mind, 'tis what I call SIMPLE Error: If a Man proceeds upon this false Bottom to regulate his Practice, such Error is then called a practical one; of the former of which he thinks it clear and beyond Dispute, that they are not punishable. By simple Errors then he means such as are purely speculative, in Opposition to such as have an Influence upon Practice. But this Distinction of Errors into speculative and practical is often repeated.*

P. 12. If we guard against evil Practices, if we take care that our Actions are but regular and agreeable to the Laws of Christ, I do not see what Harm can ensue; from Notions, he means; for he had observed, a little before, that God will not damn us for our Notions.

Again, p. 16. For any one to imagine it Zeal for God to persecute Men for Errors in Speculation, what is it but to betray an Ignorance of God and his Attributes?

Again, p. 27. Errors in PURELY SPECULATIVE Matters are not punishable.

Again, p. 29. If Errors of the Understanding are criminal, let all be so, and punish philosophical

sophical ones as well as theological. I need not cite any more Passages, the abovementioned being abundantly sufficient to prove, that by *simple Errors* he means in these Places *speculative* or *doctrinal* ones; Errors concerning such Things as are barely the Objects of our *Understanding*, without having any Influence upon our *Actions*, and consequently that he grounds the *Innocency* of such Errors upon their *speculative Nature*.

Thus the Terms *doctrinal*, or *speculative*, and *simple*, are used promiscuously, as equivalent in their Signification. Yet, at the 27th Page, when he recapitulates the *Particulars* of his Discourse, he makes them signify two different Kinds of Error.

1. 'Tis evident, I believe, that *simple Errors*, let them spring from what Cause they will, are not punishable.

2. That *Errors in Matters of Speculation* are not punishable.

Where he particularly distinguishes them as different and distinct from each other, though in his *Definitions* of *simple*, and *speculative* Error, and afterwards in the Course of his Arguments, he considered them as one and the same. Sometimes, you see, *simple* Error, or Error *simply* considered, is used in the same Sense with *speculative* or *doctrinal* Error; at other Times those Terms signify two distinct Sorts of Error. Which Mistake I have not observed, for the Sake of finding Fault, but in order to render the following Discourse the more clear, by fixing determinately the Meaning of our Terms, and the true State of the Question,

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On the same Account I am obliged to observe another Mistake, at the 14th Page, which quite alters the Question, by placing the *Innocency* of Error, not in its *simple* or *speculative* Nature, in Opposition to *practical* Errors, but in Men's not *justifying* their practical Errors. His Words are these, *Such as err and justify their practical Errors.* And again, p. 22. *The fourth and last and only bad Sort of erroneous Persons are, such as err, and practise according to, and justify* (he puts it in *Italick*) *their practical Errors*; which is removing the Stress of the Cause to a quite different Point from that whereon he had placed it before, to a Point, not only different, but utterly unintelligible. If an erroneous Conscience obliges us to act in Consequence of it, it can be no Crime to justify what we are obliged in Conscience to perform. In short, the Crime does not lie in *justifying* our Obedience to the Dictates of Conscience, but in not using all the proper Means to inform our Conscience aright. Surely Nature has given this Writer, or he has happily acquired, such a Facility of writing obscurely, that his Meaning will soon become as great a Secret to himself as it is generally to the Reader.

Another remarkable Instance of his Inaccuracy in stating his Notion is, his adding *involuntary* to his Definition of *simple or speculative Errors*. I must transcribe the whole Passage to do him and myself Justice, though I have already cited Part of it. P. 3. *If Error extends no farther than the Mind, 'tis what I call simple Error. If a Man proceeds upon this false Bottom to regulate his Practice, such Error is then called practical. How far this latter Sort of Error (practical ones) falls under the Cognizance of Man, or of a*
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much higher Tribunal, that of God, will appear from the ensuing Discourse. In order to which 'tis clear beyond Dispute, that simple and involuntary Errors are not, nor can be punishable.

There can be no Dispute but *simple Errors*, or *Errors confined to the Mind*, and *simple and involuntary Errors*, are here used as signifying the same Thing. Our Author has observed, that Writers ought to proceed *Step by Step*; I wish he had followed his own Advice, for he has made too much Haste, and taken two Steps at once, which is indeed a very unsafe Way of proceeding.

1. *Simple and involuntary* cannot possibly be *equivalent* Terms, and therefore ought not to have been joined together in his *Definition of simple Errors*.

2. But he may say, that *simple and involuntary* are here so annexed, that whatever Error is *simple* must necessarily, from the Nature of it, be *involuntary*; and consequently, though they be not *equivalent* in their *Signification*, they *infer* one another.

Be it granted, for Argument Sake, that *all simple Error* must be *involuntary*, yet *involuntary* should not have been added to *simple* in a *Definition of simple Errors*, where nothing should be inserted but what is *peculiar* to the Thing *defined*, in order to distinguish it from all others of a different Nature. Now the *peculiar* Nature of *simple Errors* consists, as he all along supposes, in their *being confined to the Mind*, in Opposition to such as influence *Practice*. This is the *Ground* of his whole Scheme; and the proper *Foundation*, upon which he ought to build the *Innocency* of

of such Errors, is, the *speculative Nature* of them. If it follows from the *Nature of Speculation* that Errors in *such Points must be involuntary*, let the *Consequence* be deduced regularly from the *Premises*, but not made Part of the *Definition* or *Proposition itself*.

3. *Simple Errors* are no more *involuntary* in their own Nature, than *practical* ones, nor *practical* ones any more necessarily *voluntary* than *simple* ones. Certainly a Man may assent to a *speculative Proposition as true*, which is *not so*, thro' his *own Fault*, thro' *Obstinacy*, thro' *Neglect* and *Carelessness*; as he may likewise be mistaken in his Opinion concerning *practical Truths*, for Want of *Ability*, or *Opportunity*, or by Means of other Causes which he has allowed, and endeavoured to prove, to be sufficient to render Errors innocent. But these Things will be considered afterwards, when I come to examine particularly his Arguments in Proof of the *Innocency* of *simple Errors*; from whence, if he proves any Thing, he proves too much, *viz.* that *practical Errors are equally innocent*, because *equally involuntary*; and that Errors concerning the Truth of the *Facts* contained in the Gospel are no more punishable than Errors about the *mysterious Doctrines* of it. At present I only observe, that, by placing the *criminal* or *innocent* Nature of Error in its being *voluntary* or *involuntary*, without Regard to any other Circumstance, he destroys his own Scheme, the Design of which is to ascribe *Innocency* particularly to *simple* or *speculative Errors*, by Way of Distinction from *practical* ones. He says, the only punishable Errors are *voluntary* ones. And who ever said otherwise?

But the Question is not, whether *involuntary* Errors be *punishable*, but only concerning *speculative* Errors as *opposed* to *practical*. Now, how does he undertake to prove the *Innocency* of *speculative* Errors? Why, by saying, that *if a Man does but take Care of his Actions, that they are good and regular, and for his Notions let him but use common Prudence and Discretion, and a God of infinite Goodness will not be so rigid a Task-master as to require Brick without Straw.* He proves the *Innocency* of *Notions*, as *opposed* to *Practice*, by a Circumstance that will make *Actions* as *innocent* as *Notions*. *Notions*, he says, are not *punishable*. And why so? Because God *will not require Brick without Straw*. Neither will he require *Impossibilities* in Respect to our *Actions*, any more than in Respect to our *Notions*. Whatever is *involuntary* must be *innocent*, and therefore *involuntary* *Notions* cannot be *punishable*. But all this Time he ascribes no *particular Innocency* to *speculative* Errors in Opposition to *practical* ones, because he places it in a Circumstance that will render them *both* equally *innocent*. I am afraid the Reader is tired with so much tedious Trifling, but I thought it absolutely necessary towards a clear and full View of the Question before us, to settle the true State of it, by freeing it from those Perplexities in which this Author has involved it.

The Question then (to use our Author's own Words, as we find them at p. 29.) is concerning *some Notions or Speculations about the blessed Trinity, or such Mysteries of Christianity*. Our Author asserts, that Errors about *such* Points are *not punishable*, because *Notions or Speculations* are, in their own Nature, *innocent*, as having no Influence upon *Practice*. This Question necessarily

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infers another, tho' our Author has taken no Notice of it, viz. whether the Doctrine of the Trinity, or other *Mysteries of Christianity*, be Doctrines purely notional or speculative. For, otherwise, we may grant the Truth of his Proposition in Respect to the Innocency of Error in *speculative Points*, and yet deny the Innocency of Error concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, or other *Mysteries of Christianity*. But I shall now confine myself to an Enquiry into the necessary Innocency of *Notions and Speculations in religious Matters*; wherein I shall examine the several Arguments brought in Support of this favourite Scheme.

The first Thing, offered by Way of Proof, we find at the Beginning of the last Paragraph of the 3d Page, in these Words, *because in the Perceptions of the Mind Men are perfectly passive.*

This Argument, though the Author, I dare say, did not perceive it, will equally render all Errors innocent, the Mind being equally passive in those Perceptions, upon which we ground our Judgments in *practical Truths*, as in *speculative ones*; and this is the very same Argument which is usually urged against *Free-will*. We act in consequence of our Judgment, and our Judgment is made in consequence of our *Perceptions*; and therefore, if, in *speculative Truths*, the Agreement or Disagreement of the Terms of a Proposition appears necessarily to the Mind, and the Mind judges according as Things appear true or false, the Progress of the Mind is the same in the Judgments which it makes concerning *practical Truths*; and so our Errors concerning *practical Truths* are as involuntary, and consequently as unpunishable, as *speculative Errors*.

The same consequence will follow in Respect to the Belief of the *Christian Religion* in general, or of any particular Fact or Facts, upon which our Belief of *Christianity* is founded ; the Mind, according to our Author, must be *passive* in its *Perceptions*, and *passive* in its *Judgments*. It is not in any Man's Power to determine how the Evidence of the Truth of those Facts shall appear, or whether he shall *judge according* as Things appear ; consequently, any Error respecting the Truth of *Christianity* is as *innocent* as any Error in our *Notions* or *Speculations* concerning the *Trinity*, &c. Thus effectually, tho' unwarily, does our Author destroy, not only *revealed* Religion, but even *Morality* itself, by rendering us *necessary*, and, if *necessary*, *unaccountable* Beings. But I need not urge this any farther ; our Author, and his Friends, if they be Friends to Religion, will readily give up the Argument, or shew how the Mind is *passive* in its Perceptions and Judgments concerning *speculative* Points, and *free* in its Perceptions and Judgments of *practical* Truths ; *passive* when it perceives and judges of *Notions* and *Speculations* about the *Trinity*, and other *mysterious Doctrines* of Christianity ; *free* when it perceives and judges of the *speculative* Evidence for the Truth of *Christianity* itself.

As this is a Matter of great Importance to *human Liberty* and to *Morality*, I shall endeavour to give a true State of it. I agree with the Author of the *Innocency of Error*, that the Mind is *passive* as in its *Sensations*, so likewise in its *Perceptions*, not only of *speculative*, but of *practical* Truths ; but it is not passive in its *Judgments*. The Mind receives the Ideas, which offer themselves,

selves, as they are, and which cannot possibly be received otherways. *Perception* is necessarily what it is, and consequently always infallibly true. A Man cannot be deceived in what he *perceives*, any more than he can be in what he *sees, hears, or feels*. Things must appear to the Mind just as they offer themselves to it; if the *Understanding*, which is the *perceptive* Faculty of the Mind, be in a proper Condition to receive Objects, and the Mind applies itself properly for such a Reception, Things will appear, as they really are in themselves; if the intellectual Faculty be naturally defective, or if the Mind be not sufficiently attentive, either through Carelessness, Prepossession, or any other Means, Things may appear different from what they are; yet, in both Cases Things appear to the Mind, whether truly or falsely, always as they are offered to it. Just as it is in respect to our *Senses*; *Sensations* are excited necessarily; Objects must appear as they are presented. If, for Instance, the Organ of Sight, be in its natural Disposition, a proper Object, at a due Distance, through a proper Medium, will appear to the Mind as it really is in Nature; but if the Organ in itself be any ways defective, or if the Object be at too great a Distance, or seen through a false Medium, Things will not appear in their true Shape and Colour: Yet still, be the Appearances true or false, they must be such as they are offered. But then, as in the Exercise of our *Senses*, Things do not always appear to be what they really are (which Appearances are yet necessarily such as they are presented to the Mind) the Mind is *free to judge or determine* within itself whether those Appearances be true or false, till it has fully considered the Matter, so

likewise it is in respect to the *Perception* of *intellectual* Objects ; though they will appear to the Mind such as they offer themselves, yet the *Judgment*, or *Determination*, which the Mind makes concerning the Truth of those Appearances, is *free*. If, for Instance, our Author's Performance has fallen into the Hands of any Persons, who read without Attention, without a Capacity for such Subjects, or with a strong Inclination to favour his Scheme, it is possible that to such Persons his Arguments, weak and obscure as they are, may appear strong and clear ; and, while their Incapacity, Inattention, or strong Prejudices continue, his Arguments will necessarily appear to them such as they offer themselves ; but they are under no *Necessity* of *judging* his Arguments to be as strong and clear, as they at first appeared to be ; they may *suspend* their *Judgment* till they have attentively examined the Force of them, as also the State of their own Heart, whether they be not under the Influence of *party Prejudice* and *Passion*, and whether the Subject be suited to their Capacities and Habit of thinking. That the Mind has actually a Liberty of *suspending* its *Judgment* or *Determination* concerning the Truth of its *Perceptions*, and that in many Instances it can forbear making *any Judgment* at all, is what every Man, that attends to the Operations of his own Mind, must experience in himself, though there may be some insuperable Difficulties in our Conceptions concerning *Free-will*. We are inwardly conscious of such a Freedom ; our Consciousness is a Thing wherein we cannot be mistaken, any more than we can be mistaken in any other *simple Sensation*. We may as well dispute whether we really feel any painful or pleasing

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Sensations, as whether we do really experience a Power of attending or not attending to the Consideration of any Subject, of judging or not judging about it. Our Author obliged me to make this Digression about *Free-will*, because his Argument, drawn from the *Passiveness* of the Mind in its *Perceptions*, destroys the Notion of *Agency* in us. I shall conclude this Head with a short Observation upon another Mistake of his, in stilling *speculative* Errors, Errors of the *Judgment*; though in this Mistake he has the good Luck to be kept in Countenance by Dr. *Whitby*. I remember, in his Notes upon the *Epistles*, speaking of the *essential* Doctrines of Christianity, the Doctor observes, that *Matters of Judgment* were not in the Number of *Fundamentals*. I presume (for he does not explain himself) he means, with our Author, some *Notions*, or *Speculations*, about the *Trinity*, or other *mysterious* Doctrines. But what an absurd Manner of speaking is this? It supposes that *some* Errors are not Errors of the *Judgment*. What are they then? Or what is Error, but a false *Judgment* or *Determination* of the Mind concerning the Truth of our *Perceptions*? *All* Errors must relate to the *Judgment*, and to *that only*. Our Author speaks also of Errors of the *Understanding*; where, by *Understanding* he must mean either the *Judgment*, or the *perceptive* Faculty, both which I have already explained. He seems to confound the *Judgment* and the *Understanding*, or *Perception*, together; whereas *Perception* is previous to the *Judgment*, and the Foundation of it. The *perceptive* Faculty of the Mind does not properly *perform any Operations*, but receives *Impressions*, internal Notices of Things, as the bodily Eye receives *Impressions*

pressions from external Objects; but the *Judgment* belongs to the *Will*, which implies *Action*; it is an Act of the Mind, determining concerning those Notices which appear to the *perceptive* Faculty.

His next Argument (though he calls it the fifth, having divided one into three, or four, all of them resolving into the *involuntary* Nature of *speculative* Error) is at the Beginning of the last Paragraph of the 7th Page, and is only the Consequence of the former Argument. *Error*, he says, *cannot be punishable, because we cannot repent of Error*; where, by *repenting*, he does not mean *retracting* an Error, but explains himself after this Manner: *A Man can have no Sting of Conscience, no Remorse, no self-condemning Notions, for having been in an Error, unless it has affected his Actions*; which, at the Bottom of the Page, he proves thus: *As 'tis a Contradiction to be fully persuaded of any Point, and repent of it at the same Time, 'twill follow that Error cannot be repented of.* The Gentleman shewed some Judgment at the End of his Book, when he put in a Caveat against *carping at Words*, for a captious Reader may frequently take Advantage of the Impropriety of his Expressions. I guess that, by *Error*, in this last Passage, he means *speculative* Error, and not *Error in general*, because not only the preceding Passage, but many other Places, and even his whole Scheme, expressly limit the Signification to such Errors only; but hasty Readers will unavoidably be led into Mistakes by such Writers. But, I presume, his Argument, when properly expressed, must run thus:

Men cannot be punished for what they cannot repent of, or be sorry for.

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They cannot repent of, or be sorry for having been in speculative Errors :

Therefore they cannot be punished for having been in speculative Errors.

The first, or major Proposition, viz. that *Men cannot be punished for what they cannot repent of, or be sorry for*, is, in some Sense, true, but not under all Circumstances ; because their Incapacity to repent may be the Effect of an Obduracy proceeding from a wilful Habit of sinning ; but that *Men cannot repent of, or be sorry for having been in speculative Errors*, is the Point disputed, and which our Author proves in a most extraordinary Manner. I shall once more put his Argument into the Form of a *Syllogism*, that, if possible, he may see the Fallacy of it.

If a Man cannot be fully persuaded of any Point, and repent of it at the same Time, he cannot repent of, or be sorry for having been formerly in a speculative Error.

*But a Man cannot be fully persuaded of any Point, and repent of it at the same Time :
Therefore a Man cannot repent of, or be sorry for, having been formerly in a speculative Error.*

I have added *formerly*, because *have been* signifies the *Time past* ; from whence the Reader will easily see a double Defect in this Argument. For, 1st, tho' our Author and his Friends cannot be fully persuaded of any Point, and repent of it at the same Time, they may, and I hope they will, live to be convinced of their Error ; and, after their Conviction, they may repent and be sorry for having entertained and so industriously propagated it.

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2dly, Though to be *fully persuaded* of any Truth, and to *repent* of such Persuasion at the *same Time*, be an Impossibility; yet to be *fully persuaded* of a Truth, and to be *punishable* for the Belief of such a Truth, are very consistent Things, because it may be his own Fault that he is so fully persuaded.

But his Argument, were there any Force in it, would prove *practical* Errors as innocent as *speculative* ones. For, if a Man be *fully persuaded*, though *erroneously*, of the Lawfulness, or Unlawfulness of any *Action*, it is impossible he should be so *fully persuaded*, and *repent* of that Action during the Continuance of such a Persuasion; and, if he cannot *repent* of it, he cannot, in this Writer's Opinion, be *punished* for it. Either the Consequence is good in respect to every Instance of Persuasion, or in none at all. This is the usual Unhappiness of our Author's Reasoning; but here he has been at some Pains to confute himself. *A Man*, says he, *p. 7. can have no self-condemning Notions for having been under a Mistake, unless it has affected his Actions.* For, —what would any Man expect should follow? Something, no doubt, in Proof of his Assertion; instead of which, he not only proves a different Proposition, but one destructive of the Distinction which he had made between *speculative* and *practical* Errors; shewing, that *both* are equally innocent. For, says he, *Error being a Mistake of the Judgment, it must direct and guide our Actions as much as Truth itself.* Now the Sway of Truth is, by directing our Actions according to our Judgment; and if That be *misinformed*, or *misguided*, the Effect must be the same as of Truth, as flowing from the same Principle. If then

then an *erroneous* Judgment must direct and guide our *Actions* as much as a *well-informed* one, we can no more *repent* of such *Actions*, than of mere *Notions* or *Speculations*, which have no Influence upon our *Actions*.

These are the only Arguments which are offered in this Performance to prove the *Innocency* of *speculative* Errors, as distinguished from *practical* ones, viz.

1. That *speculative* Errors are *involuntary*.
2. That we cannot *repent* of such Errors.

But at the 2d *Page* of the Preface, which is prefixed to the second Edition of his Book, by Way of Defence or Vindication of it, he gives us another Reason why *speculative* Errors cannot be *punished*, viz.

That the Evil lies not in them, strictly speaking, but in that peculiar Frame and Disposition of Mind which tends to betray Men into them.

This Reason is urged by another *popular* Writer (Mr. *Chubb*) in a Discourse concerning *Persecution*: A Writer less obscure and intricate in the Manner of stating his *Notions*, but equally opinionated and self-sufficient, without a proper Foundation to support such an Opinion of himself. Whether these two Writers fell naturally into the same Way of thinking, or whether Mr. *Chubb* condescended to be beholden to our Author, the Argument upon Examination, might serve Mr. *Chubb's* Purpose as little as it does *this Gentleman's*; but at present I am only to consider it in respect to the *Innocency* of *speculative* Errors.

Errors. And he could not possibly have thought of a more unfortunate Reason; it undeniably proves that *speculative* and *practical* Errors are *equally punishable*. For, if the *Evil* of any Error lies wholly in the *Frame or Disposition of Mind* which occasions it, *speculative* Errors of any Kind may sometimes, and often are, occasioned by an *Evil Frame and Disposition of Mind*, and consequently, according to our Author, are *punishable*. *Philosophers* frequently take up erroneous Opinions, and continue in them thro' *Pride* and *Self-Conceit*, or thro' a *Spirit of Opposition*; such a *Frame and Disposition* of Mind is undoubtedly *evil*, and according to his Argument, every erroneous Opinion occasioned by them is likewise *evil*. Thus again *practical* Errors are not always owing to an *evil Frame and Disposition*, but to Want of *Ability*, or *Opportunity* of Enquiry: Wherever, then, the *Frame and Disposition* of Mind, from whence *practical* Errors arise, is *innocent*, such Errors our Author is obliged, upon his own Principles, to acquit of any guilt, though the Concession destroys his whole Scheme, the Distinction between *speculative* and *practical* Errors in respect to their *Innocency*.

'Tis Time now (to use our Author's own Words once more upon this Occasion) *to look back and view the Ground we have gone over*. I have taken the Liberty to alter the latter Part of the Expression; for, tho' *to look back* and view the Ground we *stand upon*, as he expresses himself, may be possible, as far as I know, yet it is not a proper Way of speaking. But to borrow the Metaphor without criticising on the Phrase. Upon a Review, I see, we have travelled over a great deal of Ground, through many blind and almost unpassable

passable Roads of Absurdity and Self-contradiction, and are at last arrived at the very Spot from whence we set out. If this be our Author's cautious Way of *proceeding Step by Step* in a Dispute, it brings to my Mind the Story of a Person who divided *Christian Runners* into three Sorts, the last of which *stood still*. He has said, and unsaid, or said nothing to the Purpose. His Arguments prove nothing, too much, or something foreign to the Question. Not one Argument is advanced respecting the Innocency of *Speculations*, or *Notions* in particular, as distinguished from *practical* Truths, though That was confessedly the Design of his Book, but only such as either prove *all* Errors *innocent*, or *all* *punishable*. I shall therefore try to go, if not to the *Bottom* of this Question, yet a little farther into it than he, or his Fellow-labourers, seem to me to have done.

When *Speculations*, or *Notions*, as being *confined to the Mind*, are opposed to *practical* Truths, such as have an Influence upon our *Actions*, they do not mean *any* external Action whatsoever. For *Action*, *as* Action, is no more *criminal* or *punishable*, than *Error* or *Thought*, considered absolutely *as such*. Our *external Actions*, considered in *themselves*, are like the *Motions* of any other Piece of inanimate Matter, which is actuated by some other Being; and they are criminal, or innocent, only as they are directed by the *Soul*, which is an *intelligent Agent*. It does not therefore follow that an Error is punishable, because it has a Connection with *Practice*, considering Practice *simply* as an *external Action*, because Action, *as such*, is as *indifferent* in its Nature as *absolute Thought*; and, consequently,

every Argument that proves the necessary innocency of *simple* or *speculative* Errors, from the *indifferent* Nature of such Errors, will as strongly prove the Innocency of *Practice*, considered *simply* as as *external Action*: So that, if God cannot require the Belief of certain *Speculations* or *No-tions*, only because such Truths have no *inherent* Goodness in them, separate from the positive Command of God, for the same Reason he cannot require the Performance of *external Actions* which are of an *indifferent Nature*. These Cases are exactly parallel; and every Argument, drawn from the *speculative* Nature of any Doctrine in Proof of the *Innocency* of *Error*, or *Ignorance* concerning it, will equally affect our Obligation to the Performance of any *external Action*, the *antecedent Fitness* of which does not appear to us from the *Relation* and *Reason* of things. So that, in the Opinion of these Writers, there neither is, nor can be any Duty or Obligation arising properly from the *Authority* of the *Legislator*, but solely from the *antecedent Fitness* of the Things commanded. For, if God should at any Time be pleased to make a Revelation to his Creatures, unless he reveals also the *Reasonableness* and *Fitness* of every Part of it, we, it seems, are not obliged to obey him; which absolutely destroys the *Legislative Authority* of God, and makes him only the Means of informing us of our Duty, but not the Fountain of that *Authority*, from whence our Duty arises. Suppose a Person directs one of his *Equals* to do a certain thing, if the Thing appears to the Person directed *fit* and *reasonable* to be done, the *Direction* will have the same binding Force as if it were the *Command* of one who was invested with the most proper *Authority*, which any Being

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is capable of having over another. Or should a *Command* come from one in *Authority* to another properly subjected to his *Jurisdiction*, it would nevertheless carry no Obligation along with it, till the *Fitness* of it appears to the Person to whom it is given; the *apparent* Fitness of Things being, in the Opinion of some, the proper Source of all Obligation. Where then is the Notion of *Jurisdiction*, of *Power*, and *Authority*? The very Ideas, to which these Terms are annexed, are vanished. They must imply, if they mean any thing at all, that the *Superior* has a Power of giving Laws, of prescribing Rules of Action to his *Inferiors*, properly subjected to his *Jurisdiction*; which Power he has not, if the Duty of obeying arises solely from the *Fitness* of the Command, and not from the *Authority* of the Person who imposes it. In this Sense it is no Command at all; the Subject has as much Right to command his Sovereign, as the Sovereign has to command his Subject. He can tell him what is *fit* and *reasonable* for him to do,—which is all the Authority that the Sovereign has over his Subject, upon this Supposition. But the Case is otherwise; the *Creator* of the World is the *Governor* of it; in right of his *Dominion*, he has the sole *Prerogative* of giving such Laws for our Government, as seem best to his infinite Wisdom. *His Will* is the only *Law* to us, his Creatures, from whence *our Duty* and *Obligation* properly arise. The *Fitness* of *Things* is to *him* the *Reason* or *Motive* of his Commands, and to *us* the Means of discovering his Will, wherever he has not vouchsafed us the Benefit of an *external Revelation*. But, if the *Will* of *God* be, as it certainly is, the *Rule* of our Actions; if *God*, in right of his *Dominion* over us,

has Authority to prescribe Laws to us, they are obligatory, though the subject Matter of them seems ever so *indifferent in itself*. If he requires the Performance of any external Action, or the Belief of any Doctrine, without acquainting us with the wise Ends to which his all-wise Providence will make those Things subservient, it is *Rebellion* in us to refuse Obedience to his Commands. Thus much Mr. Chubb seems to own in Favour of *positive Institutions*, at the 16th Page of his *Supplement to the previous Question*; says he, *In all those Cases where there is no apparent Unfitness, and where we are satisfied of the Divinity of the Command,—there This (the Command itself, he must mean) will be a Reason for our Compliance.* In consequence of which Concession it must follow, that the Command of God will be as good a Reason for our Belief of *mere speculative Doctrines*, as he allows it to be for the Performance of an *Action*, whose *antecedent Fitness* we are not able to discover: unless he could shew, that there is an *antecedent Unfitness* in requiring the Belief of *Doctrines*, though not in the Performance of *external Actions*, indifferent in their own Nature. *It is agreeable to the moral Fitness of Things*, that Creatures should obey their Creator; which they absolutely refuse to do, if they demand any *other Reason*, besides *his positive Command*, for their Obedience.

WHEN Mr. Chubb says, in his previous Question, That *God does not act arbitrarily*, and that there can be no Duties of *mere arbitrary Appointments*, he means no more than this; That, as God is a wise and good Being, he must have some wise and good End in all his Commands *antecedent* to them, which is the Reason or Motive inducing him

him to command. To act without some *antecedent Reason* for acting in such a manner, is not to act wisely; and to entertain such a Notion of the All-wise Governot of the World, is the highest Blasphemy.

IN this Opinion we shall join Issue. Nay, I will concede a little more to him than he seems to demand, *viz.* That it is agreeable to my imperfect Conceptions of the Divine Being, that in all his Actions he not only proposes some *good End*, which Intention is *antecedent* to every Action, but that (where any Ends or Means are preferable to each other) he always proposes the *best End*, and makes choice of the *fittest Means* for the Accomplishment of it. I think, to suppose otherwise of him, is to destroy the Notion of the *Infinity* of his *Goodness*, or of his *Wisdom*. But what Advantage will they be able to make of this Concession, in prejudice of *positive Institutions*, which may have the *wisest Reasons* for their Appointment, though those Reasons do not appear to *us*? Certain *Actions* (by which I do not mean only *external* Actions, but any Act of the *Mind*) seem to us to be of an *indifferent Nature*: That is, they do not seem to have a *natural Tendency* towards effecting some *good End*. The Belief of certain Truths do not seem, of *themselves*, conducive to the Improvement, the Perfection, and Happiness of the Mind; from whence they would infer, that it is not consistent with a *wise Being* to command any thing, which, in the Nature of it, can answer no *wise End*. And true it is, that *Wisdom*, in all its Operations, must intend something agreeable to its own Nature. To talk otherwise is a Contradiction in Terms; but an Action, which to *us* seems to have no such *Natural Fitness*, may, by the Di-

rection of *infinite Wisdom*, be made subservient to certain good Purposes. It may be very expedient to make such Actions the Subject of a Divine Command, as a proper Trial of our Humility and Obedience; of our Readiness to submit *our Wisdom to God's*, and to acknowledge his *Legislative Authority* by an *implicit* Observance of his Commands. Nay, they seem, in some Respects, the most proper Means of giving us a more awful Sense both of the *Power* and *Dominion* of God over us, to whose Glory all our Actions ought either *actually* or *virtually* to tend. Corrupt and degenerate as our Nature is, there will generally be a Degree of Complacency attending our Observance of those Laws which approve themselves to our *Reason*; in which Cases it is difficult to distinguish between *Duty* and *Inclination*; whether the Ease and Satisfaction, which we feel within us, when we act agreeably to the Dictates of our Minds, be the only Motive of our Actions, or whether we act upon a Principle of *Love* and *Obedience* to God. But where we can discern no other Reason besides the *Command* of God, why we should act after such a manner, we then pay the most *absolute* Regard to his *Authority*. These are Ends worthy of the Divine Wisdom; it is *fit* and *reasonable* that *Creatures* should have the most awful Sense of the *Dominion* of their *Creator*; that they should be in a constant Disposition to *obey* him; and that they should resign, with all Humility, their *imperfect* Understandings to the Direction of *Omniscience*. It is impossible, absolutely impossible, for the united Strength of human Reason to shew, that these good Ends may not be promoted by such *positive Injunctions*, tho' the subject Matter of them seems *indifferent*, as to their
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their *natural Effects*. Mr. Cbub has observed very justly, *Suppl. p. 16. That, as God sees thro', and to the End of Things, and thereby has a perfect View of all the Circumstances and Consequences which attend our Actions, so he must see wherein the Fitness or Unfitness of every Action lies; and consequently must be a much better Judge, not only in MANY (as he most irreverently expresses himself) but in ALL Cases, than Man can possibly be, whose Views are vastly contracted.* I may safely rest the whole Cause upon this single Point; let any Man shew, that in requiring the Belief of a *Doctrine merely speculative*, or the Performance of an *external Action*, as *indifferent* in its Nature, as any Action can be, God can have no *wise and good End*. I would only observe, that in order to qualify himself for such an Undertaking, he must acquire a distinct View of the whole Extent of Causes and Effects; or, in other Words, he must be *omniscient*. It is not sufficient that we perceive no *Fitness* in a Command, because no conclusive Argument can be drawn from *our Ignorance*, but we must see distinctly and clearly an *Unfitness*, before we can reject a Command as unworthy of the Wisdom of God. Altho, therefore, there be no Duties of *mere arbitrary Appointment*, if they mean only, that in all his Commands God hath Regard to some *wise and good End*, worthy of his own Perfections, yet in respect to *our Obedience*, and *his Legislative Authority*, there may be arbitrary Commands, because we may be obliged to *obey* them, *solely* on account of *his Authority*, without knowing *explicitly* the *Reasons* of his enjoining them. *Arbitrary* is sometimes used to signify *humoursome* or *capricious*; but it oftner, and more properly, signifies *absolute*; and a Prince

is said to be *absolute*, when *his Will* is the Law to his Subjects, tho' at the same time he makes the Rules of Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness, a Law to *himself* in his Administration. His Government is said to be *absolute* or *arbitrary*, in that *his Will* or *Pleasure* carries a sufficient Obligation to Obedience from his Subjects, without assigning the *Reasons* by which it is directed; neither is it always thought agreeable to the Rules of *Wisdom* for *Civil Governors* to publish the *Reasons* of their Conduct, though Mankind of late have been so forward to reject the Commands of the *universal unlimited* and *all-wise Governor*, unless agreeable to their own contracted Notions of the *natural Fitness* of Things.

BUT to reconcile our Adversaries the more easily to the *positive* Part of Religion, it may be of some Use to consider distinctly the Opposition between Things *good in themselves*, and therefore *obligatory* in their *own Nature*, and such Things as receive their Force from the Sanction of *divine Authority*. The *moral Duties*, because arising from the *immutable Relation* of Things, are acknowledged to have an *inherent Goodness* or *Fitness* in them, and to be of *perpetual Obligation*; certain other Duties, not subsisting, as is supposed, upon any such *antecedent immutable Reasons*, but the *Pleasure* of the *Legislator*, are said to be of *positive Institution*. This Distinction, unless clearly understood, may mislead us into a Disregard of *Divine Ordinances*.

THE *positive Duties*, as they are usually termed, have a *real Goodness* in them, because they were appointed on account of a certain *Fitness* of Things. But then *this Fitness*, in respect to *some* of those Institutions, after a certain Period of Time,

Time, *expired*; and in *none* of them was it *coeval* with the Relation of Things, upon which the Fitness of *moral Duties* is founded.

For instance; in consequence of God's Intention to offer up his only begotten Son as a Sacrifice for Mankind, it might be *fit* and *expedient*, because *subservient* to *wise* and *good Purposes*, to appoint *typical Sacrifices*; and after that our Blessed Lord had actually offered up himself, it might be equally fit and expedient, because equally conducive to promote the Glory of God and the Good of Mankind, to appoint an Institution *commemorative* of this great Sacrifice. Now whatever has a *Fitness* in it, considered as a *Means* of promoting a *wise* and *good End*, may be said to be *properly* and *really good*; yet such Duties may, notwithstanding, be said to be *less* excellent than the *moral Duties*, which are grounded upon a certain *Order* of Things, fixed *originally* at the *Creation* of the World, never to alter till the End of it; whose *Fitness* does not respect any *particular People*, or *Period of Time*; and which are therefore at *all Times*, and under *all possible Circumstances*, subservient to God's Glory, and the Happiness of his Creatures: However, the Duties of *both* kinds, as far as they are a *fit Means* of promoting a *good End*, are undoubtedly *good*, by reason of *that Fitness*. For, what do we, or can we mean, when we say, that the *moral Duties* are Duties on account of their *own intrinsic Goodness*, or for their *own sake*, but only that such Actions, from the *Relation* of Things to one another, are *naturally* the *Means* of producing *Good*? Their *Fitness* arises from the *Connection* between their *Tendency* and some *Good*; which, no doubt (though we be not able so clearly to discern it in every, or in any Instance)

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stance) is the Case of all the *Ordinances* which God was pleased to give either to the *Jews*, or to *us Christians*. They were *fitted* and *adapted* to certain *Circumstances*; under those *particular* *Circumstances* they had a *Tendency* in them to answer certain *good Ends*: During the *Continuance* of the *same* *Circumstances*, the *Relation* between *them* and the *good Ends* to which they had, or have, a *Fitness* in them to produce, is, and will be, as *immutable* and *necessary*, as the *Relation* of Things in the several Instances of *moral Duties*. The Difference seems to be this; the *Circumstances*, upon which the *Fitness* of *Ordinances* is grounded, are *mutable*; whereas those *Actions* which we call *moral*, or *immoral*, are *immutable* in their *Tendencies*, and therefore *always* good or bad in their *Nature*: But in *both* Cases, wherever there is a *Fitness* between an *Action* and some *good End*, That *Action* has a *real Goodness* in it. The Reason why its *Goodness* or *Fitness*, under those *particular Circumstances*, does not oblige Mankind to the Performance of it, without an *express Command* from God, is, because Mankind by the *Light* of *Nature* could not have discovered it, as we are able to do in the Case of *moral Duties*; for which Reason, as I apprehend, such *Actions* are called *positive Institutions*. Their *Obligation* arises wholly from an *express Command*, because we have no other way of knowing it to be the *Will* of God that we should perform them. But, could we clearly discover the *Fitness* of those *Actions* without the Help of an *external Revelation*, our *Obligation* to the Performance of them might be regularly deduced from *thence*, because our *Reason* informs us, that it must be the *Will* of a *wise* and *good* Being, to have his *Creatures* govern themselves

selves by the Rules of *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, which are the Measure of his *own* Actions.

WHEN I observe, "that *positive* Duties are less excellent than the *moral* ones, which are grounded upon a certain *Order* of Things fixed originally at the Creation of the World," I do not mean that *abstracted Truths* began to be Truths at the Creation, by the *arbitrary Appointment* of the Creator; my Meaning is only this, that the *subject Matter* of them was then determined. As for instance, *Temperance* and *Chastity* are Duties on account of a certain *Fitness* arising from the *natural* and *necessary Tendency* of those Actions; yet the *Nature* of Men, upon which their *Fitness* is grounded, commenced at his *Creation*, and was of *arbitrary Appointment*. That Creatures of such a Nature ought to act after such a manner, is a Truth *eternal* and *immutable*, but their Nature was neither *eternal*, nor *necessary*, but depending upon the *good Pleasure* of their Creator.

THIS Digression (if that may be called a Digression which has so necessary a Connection with my Subject) may deserve the Consideration of those who think that *the moral Duties are the Things which alone are required by God in order to Salvation*. They may reasonably be desired to suspend their Dislike to *positive Institutions*, till they can prove, more satisfactorily than it is possible for any Man to do, that such Institutions are not *wise and good, worthy of God, and beneficial to us*. I have endeavoured the more carefully to set this Matter in a true Light, because of the Consequences of it upon the Truth of *Revelation*. According to the Principles, against which I have been arguing, Men will unavoidably be led to reject every Part of the *Scriptures*, besides what respects

respects *Morality*; and a Disbelief of *one* Part of Revelation, will soon be followed by a Disbelief of the *whole*. I am unwilling to bring a direct Charge of Deism against any *particular* Writer; but the present favourite Opinions, so industriously propagated, and so greedily received, tend in their proper Consequences to introduce it; and I cannot help thinking it to be the Design of these Writers in *general*, to seduce People into *Deism*, without incurring the Censure and Odium of so mischievous an Undertaking, by a more open Profession. I wish what I have offered may be of any Use to guard unwary Readers against embracing their Schemes, before they have well weighed them.

I HOPE I have sufficiently established my Opinion concerning *speculative Doctrines*; but, before I conclude this Discourse, I shall mention one Argument which I find in Mr. Chubb's *previous Question*. This Argument I have reserved for the Conclusion, that I might not interrupt the Thread of the Discourse.

At the 27th page, speaking of *speculative* Points, where the *moral Fitness* of Things can give us no Light, he says, *It ought to be remembered, that God will either so clearly deliver such Points, as that there shall be no Place for Error, or else he will excuse all Errors which may arise from them; it being most absurd to suppose, that a wise and good Being should give a Revelation in a Way in which it is liable to be misunderstood, and then be displeased with his Creatures if they mistake the Meaning of it; seeing such Errors are not, in the Nature of the Thing, a proper Foundation for Resentment.* It is usually the Fate of these Writers to defend their *Peculiarities* upon such Principles as subvert *Religion in general*.

Speculative

Speculative Doctrines, he says, are innocent, unless they be so clearly revealed as to leave no Place for Error.

If this Argument be conclusive, not only *speculative*, but *all* Errors are innocent, because, if there be *Room for Error*, he thinks it inconsistent with the Wisdom and Goodness of God to punish Men for *erring*; but if this Writer believes *Christianity*, or even the *moral Fitness* of *Things*, his Belief is a Confutation of his own Argument: For, there is *Room for Error* even in *these* Points, and yet there is no *Necessity* that a Man should be either *ignorant*, or *mistaken* concerning them. Now, if we be capable of *understanding* and *believing* any *speculative* Truth, we may be *punished* for *not* understanding and believing it. Or, will Mr. *Chubb* deny that God may, under certain Penalties, require any Thing which it is in our Power to perform; which, however, his Argument obliges him to deny, or else there is no Force in it. Let us try how it holds when applied to *sin in general*. It is *absurd and ridiculous* to suppose, that a wise and good Being should create us capable of *sinning*, or leave *Room for Sin*, and yet be displeased with us for *sinning*. It would be a much more absurd Thing to lay us under the Necessity of assenting to any Truth, and then be pleased with, or reward us for, believing. In short, he destroys the Notion of Virtue and Vice, of a State of Trial and Probation, and takes away the Foundation of Rewards and Punishments.

I am told, that this Writer has no small Share of Credit with his *Party*; but it is to me somewhat difficult to conceive how such extravagant and wild and pernicious Opinions should meet with

with a favourable Reception, while there is any Regard to *Religion*, or the Peace and Welfare of *Society*, any *common Sense* remaining among us. Probably, in a Time of so much *Indulgence*, not to say *Licentiousness*, I may be thought to speak with too much Warmth and Zeal; but I am speaking, as I think, in Defence of every Thing that is valuable, and worthy of our most affectionate Concern. It does not arise from any *personal* Prejudices towards the *Men*, for I am not known to any of them; nor from *Party Considerations*, for *Religion* and the *publick Good* can be of no *Party*; but from a sincere Conviction of the dangerous Tendency of their Principles. A *Spirit of Meekness*, I acknowledge, is a *true Christian Spirit*; but to be *zealously affected in a good Thing*, is an *Apostolical Rule*, of equal Authority, and very consistent with it. *Charity* likewise, and *Moderation*, are Virtues of a most excellent Nature, and of the highest Estimation with God; but they are sometimes counterfeited by an *irreligious Indifferency*; and a *Christian Divine* * can, not only labour to lessen the Crimes of *Heresy* and *Schism*, but contemptuously stile them *Theological Scarecrows*, frightful only to such foolish People as are not able to see thro' the Appearances of Danger, with which the Superstition of ignorant, or the Policy of designing People have cloathed them. I have not heard, that he ever met with any Publick Disgrace or Discountenance, for publishing such an Opinion, so rudely and vulgarly expressed; but History tells us how it would have fared with him, had he lived in those Times when *Church Censures* were duly executed.

* The Author of the *Innocency of Error*, p. 28. — This Writer is now a considerable Dignitary. A N

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ENQUIRY

INTO THE

NATURE and IMPORTANCE

OF THE

Trinitarian Doctrine.

IT was the Design of the former Discourse to consider the Nature of *speculative* Doctrines ; and to shew that the Belief of such Truths may be required of us by God. We are next to enquire into the Nature of the Doctrine relating to the *Trinitarian* Controversy, whether it *be* so purely *speculative*, or *notional*, as our Adversaries represent it. We shall industriously avoid repeating what has been already offered, any farther than our present Subject makes it necessary. Thus much I must desire the Reader to remember, that by *Notions*, or *Speculations*, they understand such *Truths* as have no *Connection* with *Practice*, such as are *confined to the Mind* ; of which kind they imagine the *Trinity*, and other *mysterious* Points of *Christianity*, to be ; thence inferring the *Innocency* of *Error*, or *Ignorance* concerning them. This is the Scheme upon which so great a Stress has

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has been laid ; and yet, were it capable of being supported by the clearest and strongest Arguments, after all it will not serve the Cause for the sake of which it was invented. For, tho' we should grant, that *Notions* or *Speculations*, for the Reasons alledged by them, are not capable of being made *Terms* of *Salvation*, they have not considered distinctly, or so much as attempted to consider, the *principal* Question ; which is, whether the Doctrine relating to the *Trinity*, be such a Point of *mere Speculation* ? Wherefore, it might be thought sufficient, in Answer to what they had said upon the Subject of *speculative* Doctrines, to deny that the *Trinitarian* Doctrine is intirely *speculative*, or *confined to the Mind*, because it has a *necessary Connection with Practice*, to which *Speculation* is directly opposed. A Point so absolutely necessary to the Purposes of their Scheme we might reasonably require them to prove, before they can be thought justly to deserve any Answer from us ; they go upon this Supposition, that the *Trinity* and other *mysterious* Doctrines of *Christianity* are purely SPECULATIVE ; if we deny their *postulatum* (and we have as much Right to *deny*, as they have to *assert*, without Proof) their whole Fabrick falls to the Ground. . But, though the Labour of the Proof lies properly upon them, I shall offer a few Things to their Consideration, concerning the Nature of the *Trinitarian* Doctrine, to shew, that it is a Matter of *Practice*, as well as *Speculation* ; a Point which greatly affects the Scheme of Christianity, and consequently our eternal Salvation.

THAT

THAT *Christian Worship* is a *practical* Matter, will hardly be denied by these *speculative* Writers; neither need I here distinguish between *mental*, and *bodily* worship, between the *internal* Addresses of our Minds, and such as are accompanied with *external* Actions: because *both* kinds, if *either* of them, will be allowed to have a Connection with the Doctrine of the *Trinity*. That *Christian Worship* is connected with the Belief of the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, may easily be demonstrated from Principles agreed on by both Sides. I think, I may venture to call it an *allowed* Principle, That *God* is to be *worshipped*; from whence it must necessarily follow, that if there be three co-equal *distinct Persons* in the *Godhead*, and it be sufficiently revealed that there *are*, they have, *each* of them, an *equal* Claim to our *Worship*. Were there no particular Command in the *Gospel* for the *Worship* of the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, yet, whoever believes them to be *truly* and *properly* *God*, the *one* *God* with the *Father*, he must think himself obliged to worship them *equally* with *God* the *Father*. This would be a *Deduction*, though *human*, yet necessary and obvious. The Argument is short and easy.

OUR GOD is to be worshipped by us.

THE Son and Holy Ghost, with the Father, are our God:

THEREFORE the Son and Holy Ghost, with the Father, are to be worshipped by us.

IF the *Premises* be revealed, *viz.* That *God* is to be worshipped, and that the *Son* and *Holy Ghost* are *God*, the *Conclusion* is undeniably clear, that the Son and Holy Ghost are *equally* intitled to *Worship*: which shews, that a Doctrine, or Practice, may be *necessary* to *Salvation*, though it be
not.

not contained in *express* Words in *Scripture*. For, a *Deduction* from *express* Words, where it is clear and obvious, may as properly be said to be *revealed*, as the *express Truth* from whence the *Deduction* is so clearly and easily drawn. Whatever God has given us a sufficient Capacity of *knowing*, such a Truth, in respect to all the Purposes of a Revelation, and to our Obligation to the Belief of it, he has *sufficiently revealed*, and may require the Belief of it, as a necessary Term of his Favour and Acceptance. I shall not here enlarge upon this Observation, but my Argument gave me a fair Opportunity of hinting it, and our Adversaries have made it very seasonable.

Not, that the Point of *Worship*, especially in respect to the *Son*, rests altogether upon the Authority of any human *Deductions*, but is supported both by *Example* and *Precept*. I do not intend to enter into the Particulars of this Matter (which have been so fully examined by more able Hands) though I am obliged to mention them. I shall refer the Reader to the 7th of the *Acts*, and the 59th Verse; the 3d of the 1st *Epistle* to the *Thess.* and the 11th Verse, and the 10th of *Rom.* and the 13th Verse; where he will find the *Invocation* of *Christ* both *practised* and *recommended*. At the 5th of the *Revelations* and the 10th Verse: The *Lamb* of God is declared to be *worthy to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory*. At *Heb.* 1st and the 6th there is an *express* Command to worship him: *And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the World, he saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him*. From the Authorities now cited, we might prove, that the same Sort or Degree of *Divine Worship* is due to the *Son* which we pay to the *Father*:

Father : but my Design obliges me only to prove, what has been generally *allowed*, that the Son is to be *worshipped*. Now, if *Christian Worship* be thus *connected* with the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, and if *Worship* be a Matter of *Practice*, then the Doctrine of the *Trinity* is not a Point of *mere Speculation*, confined to the *Mind*; consequently, their *Scheme* about *speculative* Doctrines can be of no Service in a Controversy concerning the Duty and Importance of believing the Doctrine of the *Trinity*.

BUT, it seems, it is pretended by some, that it is *lawful*, but not *necessary*, to worship the Son and the *Holy Ghost*; a thing perfectly *indifferent*, whether it be done, or omitted by us. This is a Notion intirely novel, unscriptural, and absurd. The *Arians* have the Credit of the Discovery, they being the first who ever taught, that *Divine Worship* is an *indifferent* Action.

THE *Heathens* were directed, either by the Light of *Nature*, or by *Tradition*, to pay *Divine Worship*; and, though they were many times mistaken in the *proper Object* of their Worship, and paid it where it was not *due*, yet they always considered it as a Matter of *Duty*, a Tribute *due* to their God, or Gods, and not as a *civil Compliment*; that might be omitted without any *Injury* or *Offence*.

THE *Jewish* Law did not make any Alteration in respect to the *general Duty*, but only instructed the People in the right manner of performing it, and directed them, to the *proper Object* of their Worship. The World before paid *Divine Worship*; and whether they paid it to *one* or to *more* Beings, they paid it always as a *Debt* due to them. The Law of *Moses* instructed the *Jews* to whom

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this *Debt of Homage* was due, and after what manner it was to be paid; not to *many*, but to *one* God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. They were absolutely *commanded* to worship the *true God*, and as absolutely *forbidden* to worship any *other* Being; because Divine Worship is God's *rightful Claim*, arising from the Relation that we stand in towards him; and therefore, if we neglect to give him That Homage to which he has a *natural Right*, or if we give his *Right* to *another* to whom it is not due, we *injure* him, and are guilty of a *Breach of Duty*.

THE *Christian Revelation* makes still *farther Discoveries* concerning the Object of Worship. The *Jews* were instructed that *one* God only was the *true* God, to whom *alone* they were to direct their Worship: the *Gospel* confirms That Instruction, and informs us, that the *three Persons* in the sacred and ever-blessed *Trinity* are the *one true God*. The *Jews* worshipped *one* God, and *Christians* worship *three Persons* in *one* Godhead. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*: This is the plain Law of *both Covenants*; but *our* Lord God is *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct Persons* united in *one undivided Nature*. Thus *every Dispensation* considered *Divine Worship* as an *indispensible Duty*, and only directed Mankind to pay it to a *proper Object*; not leaving them at *Liberty* either to *give*, or *with-hold* it at *Pleasure*. That the *true* God has a *Right* to be worshipped; that it is our *Duty* to give unto him *That Right*; and that we *injure* and *offend* him by giving to any *other* Being what he claims as due *only* to *himself*; these are Truths, one would think, too obvious to be disputed. If the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, with the *Father*, be the

true

true God, whom *Christians* are to worship, then they have a *Right* to our Worship; if they be not the true God, then they have *no Right*: again, if they have a *Right* to our Worship, we ought in Point of *Duty* to give it; if they have not a *Right* we ought not to give it them, because we thereby *injure* the true God, who is justly intitled to our Worship, and has declared, that he will not *give his Glory to another*. Upon This State of the Case the *Arians* must either give up the *Lawfulness* of worshipping the Son and Holy Ghost, or allow the *Necessity* of doing it. From hence, also, I might shew the Absurdity of their Distinction between *Subordinate*, and *Ultimate* Worship, because the *Object* of *Christian* Worship being only the *one true God*, the *same kind* and *Degree* of Divine Worship must be due to *each Person* in the *Godhead*. An *Unity* of *Nature* in the *Object* must have an *Unity* of *Worship*; and if there be not an *Unity* of *Nature* in the *three Persons*, if either *Son*, or *Holy Ghost*, be not, with the *Father*, the *one true God*, they ought not to be worshipped at all, because *all* Divine Worship is *appropriated* to the *one true God*. But at present I am only to prove in *general*, that Worship is due to the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, which is the necessary Consequence of their Concessions concerning the *Lawfulness* of worshipping them.

FROM what has been offered I think it appears undeniably true, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity* is not a Matter of *mere Speculation*, because it has a necessary Connection with *Christian Worship*; that it is not a Point of an *indifferent* Nature, but of great *Moment* and *Importance* to the Honour of God, and the Salvation of *Christians*. For, however difficult it may be thought to state the Notion

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of *essential* or *fundamental* Doctrines, so as to determine positively upon every particular Instance that may come under Debate among Christians; yet there can be no doubt whether it be a Point of very considerable Consequence so to regulate the Unity of the *Christian Worship*, as that there may be no Excess on one Side, nor Defect on the other.

WHEN I first entered upon this Subject, I had Thoughts of considering how much more effectually the Purposes of Christianity seem to be answered upon the *Orthodox*, than upon the *Socinian*, or *Arian* Scheme; in that it heightens the Love of God in the Redemption of Mankind, and best agrees with the several Passages of Scripture relating to it; in that it is more satisfactory to our guilty Fears of Punishment for our Sins, lays a surer and more certain Foundation of Hope of Pardon and eternal Life, and raises a greater Abhorrence of the Guilt of Sin, which could not be remitted without the Payment of such an inestimable Price by way of Satisfaction: I say all these Purposes are thought by many great and good Men to be more effectually answered, by supposing the *Divine Nature* itself to be *personally* united to the *human Nature* for the Work of our *Redemption*, than if our *blessed Redeemer* were only a *mere Creature*, however excellent and exalted. But, as I was willing to advance nothing, if possible, that may be liable to be disputed, I chose rather to put the Cause upon the single Point of *Worship*, against which, I think, there cannot lie any reasonable Objection.

I DID not intend to have detained the Reader any longer, but I find myself obliged to take Notice of a *Defence* of the *Innocency of Error asserted*, wherein the Author would be thought to disown
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the Scheme which he advanced in that Discourse. He says in this Defence (which indeed I never saw till after I had printed off my Observations upon his Discourse) p. 7. *That it was not his Design or Thought, that all sorts of Error, except those which immediately relate to Practice, are unblamable*; and he introduces the present Bishop of Sarum* challenging the learned and excellent Bishop of Oxford†, to name one serious Author who has laid down any such Position: A Challenge not to be accepted without manifest Disadvantage to the Person who accepts it! For, had twenty Writers instead of one been named, not one of them, perhaps, would have been allowed the Character of a serious Writer. And as to the above cited Declaration, of his Lordship's Friend, by the Help of one single Word, properly placed (I will not say with Design) the Defender may still maintain the Opinion, with which he is charged, though he seems here to have given it up. The Charge against this Writer is, that he asserts the Innocency of merely speculative Errors, such Errors as have no Connection with Practice. In answer to it, he says, it was not his Thought, that all sorts of Error, except those which IMMEDIATELY relate to Practice are unblamable. Thus by changing the State of the Question, he may, as far as I can tell, only have concealed his Opinion, instead of declaring it. An Influence, and an immediate Influence, are not equivalent Expressions. A Doctrine may relate to Practice, though not immediately; it may have Connection with Practice, though a more distant and remote one; consequently, this Writer may be of the Opinion, that all Errors are innocent, except those which some

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* Dr. Hoadley.

† Dr. Potter.

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way or other have a *Relation to Practice*, though he does not maintain the Innocency of *all* such Errors as do not *immediately* relate to it. The general Opinion, therefore, with which he is charged he is still at full Liberty to hold without any Contradiction to the Declaration which he has since made in his Defence. But let his *real* Meaning be what it will, the *Publick* is no farther concerned with a Man's Opinions than to take them from the common and usual Acceptation of his Expressions. If a Writer *expresses* one thing, and *means* another, the *World* is not in Fault for misunderstanding him, but *be* for writing before he is capable of conveying his Meaning intelligibly; and the Errors, into which he may be the Occasion of leading ignorant or careless Readers, are no less dangerous than if they were his *own real Sentiments*. This Writer, in the abovementioned Discourse, has frequently asserted, in the most express Terms imaginable that *Errors merely speculative, or confined to the Mind*, which elsewhere he calls *Notions*, in Opposition to such as have an *Influence upon Practice*, are, and must be *innocent*. This general Position he has over and over again laid down, and assigned Reasons in Support of it. Truths *speculative* and *practical* he sets in *Opposition* to one another; but this *Distinction* is wholly destroyed, in respect to the *Innocency* or *Guilt* of such Errors, if the *Innocency*, or *Guilt* of them be owing *wholly* to something else, without any Regard at all to their *speculative*, or *practical* Nature. And after an Opinion so plainly expressed, shall it be a sufficient Vindication of *himself*, or Satisfaction to the *World*, that he has in the same Discourse laid down *contrary* Positions? I am sensible, he *has* advanced *contradictory* Opinions; whether
ignorantly

ignorantly or designedly, it is impossible for me to determine; however, this *Inconsistency* does not hinder the Propagation of a *beloved Scheme*, but only serves for an *evasive Defence*, whenever it is attacked. This, I say, has been the Conduct of *some Writers*, when they wanted to guard a *novel*, or *dangerous* Opinion against publick Censure. As to *this Writer*, if he pleases, he shall be allowed to plead *Ignorance*, but then he must be contented to take the *Disgrace* that usually attends it, and not attempt to throw it upon those who understand his Writings according to the known and settled Acceptation and Construction of Words. He has plainly expressed an Opinion which he does not *believe*, or does not care to *own*: the *Publick*, not excepting some of his particular Admirers, *did*, and do *still* understand him in the same Sense, which I apprehended to be his Meaning, after the most careful and impartial Perusal of his Book: The Notions contained in it appeared to me to be of a very destructive Tendency: I have seriously examined, and I hope fully confuted them: If after all, the Publick has mistaken his Meaning, I can only say, either *he* could not express himself intelligibly, or *they* want common Apprehension.

BUT if these Writers do *really* mean no more, than that *all involuntary* Errors are *unblamable*, that a Man cannot be *punished* for what he cannot *help*, any more than a *Stone* is accountable for not having a Power of *Self-motion*, is there any Discovery in *all this*? Is it for *this only* that they are celebrated, extolled, rewarded? that their Performances are so industriously recommended and circulated by the *Party*? Is it for the Denial of any thing *like this* that they are so angry with those who are called the *Orthodox Clergy*, that is, the

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Body of the Clergy of the Church of England? In our Turns we have a Right to call upon them to name the Authors of any Credit and Reputation among us, who have asserted, that *Hereticks*, or *Schismaticks*, though they have used *all possible Means of Information*, may justly be *punished*. In respect to their *future Condition*, we only say, they have not a *Right to that particular Degree of Happiness* which is promised in the *Gospel*, because they do not perform the *Conditions* upon which it is promised, and because they can claim a Title to it *only from an express Promise*. Not to confer a *Favour*, does not come under the proper Notion of *Punishment*, unless there be a Claim of *Right* to that Favour, and then it ceases to be a *Favour*. If, for Reasons of Wisdom and Government, God thinks it fit to inflict any *Evil* upon his Creatures, which he had a *Right* to inflict; or if he deprives them of any *Good*, or with-holds it from them, when they could not claim any *Right* to it, he does not *punish* them, but only refuses to *grant* them certain Benefits, which are Acts of *Bounty*. So, likewise, with regard to the *Laws of the Land*, they are not *punished* for disbelieving any of the *established Doctrines*, or for *separating* themselves from the *established Worship*, but only excluded from certain *Privileges*, which the *Civil Magistrate* has the *discretionary Disposal* of: For, we apprehend, the *Legislature* does no *Injury* to any *Subjects* by depriving them of Privileges, which it has a Right to give, or to with-hold, according to Discretion; and which it is in Duty obliged to give, or with-hold, according as the Ends of Government shall seem to require.

Temple-Bar, January
the 8th, 1728-9.

ON
PREDESTINATION.

PART I.

Mr. HOOKER,

THERE lies an Objection to God's Impartiality, which I have been settling in two former Papers, but then it is founded upon a Piece of false Doctrine, that of absolute *Predestination*, and *irrespective Reprobation*. That God should, as some assert, out of Mankind, fallen and beheld in an equal Degree of Demerit, give his Son to die for the Redemption of some of them, and those a small Part, and leave the rest without a Redeemer; that antecedent and without any Respect to what they can, or shall do, he has determined some of them to be eternally happy, and some to be as eternally wretched; that accordingly he gives so much Grace to the former, that they cannot miss of Heaven, and so little to the latter, that they cannot possibly attain to it: This is a Scheme of Doctrine entirely irreconcilable with the divine Impartiality; but then it is also irreconcilable with Reason, our natural Notions of God, plain Passages of Scripture, and is only supported by broken Fragments and Texts of the Bible, considered by themselves without Regard to their Context and

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true Meaning, misunderstood and misapplied, and therefore cannot be true.

OUR natural Notions of the Deity are those of a wise, good, and just Being, the Maker, the Preserver of Men, who shews his Goodwill to all his Creatures, and delights in communicating Existence and the Benefits of it! Now Reason says, such a Being cannot be fanciful, cannot be hard, cannot be injurious. He, who made all Men, cannot but love all Men, so long as they endeavour alike to please and obey him. God is a Sovereign, but not an earthly one surrounded with Prejudice, Ignorance, Error, Humour, or Weakness. We bless his Almighty Power, because it delights not in doing Mischief, because it is sweetened with Mercy, regulated by Justice, directed by Wisdom. Can such a Being shew unequal Favour, or unequal Severity, to Objects that are alike? Can he love a Man for doing what he could not help doing, or hate a Man for doing what he could not but do? Is it the Part of Wisdom, is it the Part of Equity to make a Difference in Creatures, alike the Objects of his Wrath, or Mercy? Is it Goodness, is it Justice, to bring a Person into Being without his Consent, without allowing him a Possibility of making himself easy, without a Possibility of avoiding Wretchedness, and that for ever? How could a Creature deserve to be put into such Circumstances, before he existed? How then could God place him in them, when he did not deserve it? Unless he delights in shewing his Power, at the Expence of all his other Perfections. This is the Idea of a Sovereign Tyrant, not of a wise, a good, a just, a perfect God. But perhaps it will be said, these are Depths too great for shallow

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low Reason to fathom; who art thou, that reply'st against God? Search the Scriptures, and see what Revelation has discovered in this Matter.--- Let us search them then.

HERE we find God represented as a Master, but not an hard one gathering where he has not srowed, or reaping where he has not sown, but requiring of every Man, and accepting every Man, according to what he has, and not according to what he has not. We behold him as a Sovereign, different in his Administrations, but always just and good, putting Mankind under various Dispensations, the *Jew* under a Law, the *Gentile* under Nature; but then taking Account and judging them accordingly, the *Jew* by his Law, the other without it. We see him figured out as a Father, tender, compassionate, declaring that he delights not in the Death of him that dies, setting Life and Death before Men, courting them to the one, deterring them from the other, and weeping over those who would not be persuaded to be happy. The sacred Page sets before us God so full of Love and Mercy to Mankind, that he sent his only begotten Son, to the Intent, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life. Does the Scripture confine the Benefit of this Redeemer to a few? No, but quite otherwise says, that he died for all, that God laid on him the Iniquity of us all. The Apostle to the *Romans* puts this beyond Dispute, where he teaches, that as the Gift of God in *Christ* in some Things exceeded the Offence of *Adam*, so in nothing it fell short of it: And therefore as this brought Judgment on all Men, so the free Gift of Life through *Christ* came upon all Men. For as in *Adam* all die, so in *Christ* shall

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shall all be made alive. As therefore if Man had kept his Integrity, every one would have had it in his Power to please God, so by the Gift of *Christ* every one must have it too : Since the Consequences of Redemption extended full as wide, as those of *Adam's* Transgression, that is to *all* Men. These are plain Passages of Holy Scripture, which represent to us an universal God and Father of all, an universal Redeemer of Mankind, the Offers of Life and Death made to every one of them, and consequently a Possibility of attaining the one, and escaping the other in every one ; unless we can suspect God of practising the greatest Mockery and Derision to his Creatures, as well as Injustice.

I proceed to examine the Passages brought in Support of the contrary Opinion, and shew the Misinterpretation and wrong Application of them. And previous to this, I must lay down a Rule or two necessary to be observed in explaining Passages of Scripture, if we have not a Desire to be deceived : One is, to consider the Occasion, Connection, and Drift of the Place in Question, and give it the Meaning proper to the Argument which the Writer is engaged in : Another is to resolve difficult and doubtful Texts by plain and certain ones. If in these Lights we examine the 29th and 30th Verses of the 8th Chapter to the *Romans*, we shall find Scripture consistent with itself and Reason, in this Point, as well as in all others. The Apostle, in this Chapter, as almost all thro' the Epistle, sets himself to prove, that the Distinction of *Jew* and *Gentile* was now ceased, that other Nations had an equal Share in the *Messiah*, with the *Jewish* : That in order to have the Be-

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nefit of *Christ*, Faith was necessary, and Obedience to the new Covenant, but not Circumcision or other legal Performances, as the *Jews* contended, who would allow the Offers of the Gospel to be made to none till they became *Jews*; and those, who would not comply with them in this Matter, they persecuted and afflicted; and the *Gentile* Christians by this Means were distressed and contumeliously used even to Death. To convince the *Jews* of their Error, and beat them out of that fond Conceit, that they were the only People of God, and to comfort the suffering *Gentiles*; he tells them, that God had attested his Acceptance of the *Gentile* Converts by the Gifts of his Spirit to them, for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God: And if Sons, then Heirs of God and joint Heirs with *Christ*, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. The Way to this Glory is this present State of Suffering: And I reckon the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us: We shall be delivered in God's good Time, and shall be comforted above our Affliction. We hope for this Deliverance, and pray for it: But in this Case, as in all others, the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh Intercession for the Saints, according to the Will of God, who knows better than we ourselves, what is good for us, and therefore has sent you these present Afflictions, to make you more glorious and more happy by your Behaviour under them. For we know that all Things work together for Good, to them that love

love God, to them who are called according to his Purpose; that is, whom he has called to this State of Affliction and Suffering for the Sake of the Gospel, according to his Design of putting those into the Post of Danger, who, he foresaw, would be able to stand it: And whom he did thus foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son, *viz.* in suffering for him and like him, that he might be the First-born among many Brethren, the Captain of Salvation made perfect through Suffering. Moreover whom he did predestinate for this Purpose of Suffering for the Gospel at that Time, them he also called to it; and whom he called, them he also, upon their good Behaviour under Afflictions, justified, that is, acquitted, received into Favour; and whom he thus justified and approved, them he also glorified, that is, rewarded with the Triumphs of his Grace in this Life, and if they persevere in Duty, will give them Glory in the other. Here is an Account of some, who were foreseen fit for Suffering for Religion, who therefore were destined for that Office, called to it, acquitted for their good Behaviour in it and rewarded for it. Not a Syllable appears, that can give the least Support to the Doctrine of an absolute Determination of any Man to Happiness or Misery, without his having the Power to obtain the one, or avoid the other. It is the Condition of all Mankind to be called to some Sort of Duty and Station of Life. Whom God foresees fit for one according to his Purpose of governing and conducting the Affairs of the World he predestines and calls to it, and acquits and rewards them for behaving well in it. An Eye, tinged with
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with the rigid predestinarian Tenets, can read the whole Scheme in every Word of this Paragraph, and dream of secret Purposes, hidden Wills, inward efficacious Calls ; and what not ? But an unprejudiced Reader will see nothing of all this, nor will suffer a Meaning to be drawn out of it, inconsistent with the Apostle's Declaration in the Verse almost immediately following, that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all ; therefore not for a few only, whom he predestinated, happen what will, to eternal Life.

HAVING done with this Chapter, proceed we to the next, the 9th to the *Romans*, which has been thought to contain many Passages in favour of the Doctrine which I am overthrowing : But, upon Examination we shall find that they are just as little to the Purpose, as that which I have already explained. The Apostle begins the Chapter with good Wishes, and hearty Desires for his Countrymen the *Jews*, and mentions some of their Privileges, the Adoption, the Glory of God in their Temple, the Covenants, the Law, the Service of God, the Promises, whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Flesh, *Christ* came. But he bids them not be vain of all this, or trust in it : For the Promise, as far as it was a Promise of Salvation, and eternal Life, was not to all *Abraham's* Seed, or indeed to any, barely for descending from him ; but to the Seed of his Faith, those that were like him in Goodness, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*. For so he expressly says : They that are the Children of the Flesh, these are not the Children of God, but the Children of Promise are counted for the Seed. Then he proceeds to instruct them not to think it hard, that God now for their Sins rejected the *Jews* from being his People, and chose other Nations

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Nations in their stead to the like Honour : For to raise or depress a People, outwardly to favour and prosper the Inhabitants of one Country, and not those of another, was the undoubted Prerogative of the great Sovereign of the World, without any Injury, and therefore without any Ground of Complaint to any Man, beheld in the whole of his Existence. Thus he once selected the *Jewish* People under one Covenant, and now he chuses others, with whom to place his Name, and to whom to reveal himself, not determining one to Damnation, or the other to Salvation upon any other Terms, than those of having, or wanting Faith and Obedience. If God were at Liberty to adopt the *Jewish* Nation, why is he not at Liberty now to adopt another to like or greater Privileges? For consider, says the Apostle, when *Rebecca* has conceived by one, even by our Father *Isaac* (the Children not being yet born, neither having done any Good or Evil, that the Purpose of God according to Election might stand, not of Works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her, the Elder shall serve the Younger; as it is written, *Jacob* have I loved, but *Esau* have I hated. In this Passage two Things are certain: First, that by *Jacob* and *Esau* we cannot understand their Persons, but the Nations descended from them. Secondly, that *loved* and *hated* here does not mean the one to be saved, and the other damned; but one to be outwardly favoured in this Life, and the other not so, that is, that one should command, and the other obey him. The Reason for the first Observation is plain, because what was said of them, was not true of them in their own Persons; for *Esau* never served *Jacob*, that we read of: But it was true of the Nations descended from them;

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them; for the Posterity of *Esau* did serve the Posterity of *Jacob*, till at the Time foretold he shook his Yoke from him: Agreeably to what the Lord said to *Rebecca*, enquiring why the Children struggled within her—*Two Nations are in thy Womb, and two Manner of People shall be separated from thy Bowels; and the one People shall be stronger than the other People, and the Elder shall serve the Younger.*

Since then it is certain, that we are to understand by *Jacob* and *Esau* in this Place, not their *single Persons*, but the *Nations* sprung from them; it is also equally certain, that the Word *loved* and *hated* here do not imply the one to be eternally saved, or the other eternally damned, but only that the one should bear Rule and be more favoured than the other in the present Life. For since by *Esau* we must mean the *Edomites* sprung from him, will any one in his Wits say, that all the *Edomites* were damned? and since by *Jacob* is meant the *Jews* derived from him, a Man must be still as much out of his Wits to assert, that all the *Jews* were eternally saved. And yet both these Assertions must be maintained by him who interprets *loved* and *hated* in this Text, as relating to the future States of Heaven and Hell. Since then the Sense which I have given to *Jacob* being loved, and *Esau* hated, can be the only true one, the Meaning of this often objected Passage is no more than this, that when *Rebecca* was with Child of Twins, *Esau* and *Jacob*, before the Children were born, or had done Good or Evil, God said to her, the Descendants of *Jacob* shall bear Rule, and be more honoured in this Life, than the Descendants of *Esau*. And this he told her before they were born, that God's raising the *Jewish* Nation to Greatness, and

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depressing the *Edomites*, might appear to be by virtue of his Prerogative, and that his Purpose of electing this People to execute his Designs, and not the other, might stand, not of Works, (for one People was not better than the other,) but of God, who was pleased for his own secret Reasons to call the one his People, and not the other. For in such Cases of bestowing outward Favours and Revelations of himself God is accountable to none, but will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and will have Compassion on whom he will have Compassion, as he told *Moses* with respect to his Choice of the *Jewish* People. So then it was not *Esau's* running and crying for the Blessing, which could entail it on his Posterity: For God was pleased antecedently to shew Mercy on the Descendants of *Jacob*, and raise them above the other; which he might do for wise Reasons, which we have no Right to enquire into.

The Apostle goes on to tell the *Jews*, that Hardness of Heart had happened to them for their Sins and Unbelief: That this also was the undoubted Privilege of God, to remove the Light from those who shut their Eyes, and harden them who went on to harden themselves. That in this Case, as he will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, so whom he will he hardeneth. When Men have sinned themselves out of God's Favour, and made themselves ripe for Judgment and Punishment, God will in Anger sometimes defer the Execution, suffering them in the mean time to go on in Wickedness that his Justice on impenitent Sinners may more signally appear. Thus he did to *Pharaoh* and his Nation: He had hardened his Heart against many Messages and many Plagues, till at last he made himself ripe for Destruction.

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But God was then pleased to keep him a little longer alive, that his Punishment might be more evident in the Destruction of him and his People in the *Red-Sea*. I had determined, says God, to destroy thee and thy People with the Pestilence, for ye had deserved, and I had resolved your Death, but I raised thee up from that Bed of Sickness for this very Purpose, that I might shew my Power in thee, and my Name might be declared throughout all the Earth. This the Apostle intimates to be the Case of the *Jews*, who had sinned themselves out of God's Favour, and deserved his Anger long before he poured it on them, but he endured them with much Long-suffering, till they were Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction, that he might make his Power more clearly discerned, and might take that Opportunity of making known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of his Mercy, which he had afore prepared to Glory, even the *Gentiles*, whom he called to be his Church and People. The murmuring *Jews* reply, if this be the Case, if we be cast off from being God's People, because he hardens us; why does he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his Will? The Apostle answers such a bold questioning of the Ways of Providence in the Disposal of its Favours in this Life, in its chusing this and rejecting that People, with great Indignation, and a Passage out of one of their Prophets: Nay, but who art thou, O Man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? hath not the Potter Power over the Clay of the same Lump, to make one Vessel unto Honour, and another to Dishonour? That is, hath not God Power to raise one Nation to the Honour of being called his People, and reject another from being

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so, when they grow unworthy that Name? That this is the Meaning of the Passage, and that by Vessel we are to understand, not a single Person, but a Nation, and, by Honour and Dishonour, outward Privileges and Advantages in this World; is plain from *Jer. xviii.* whence this Allusion of the Potter is taken. For thus it stands there: The Prophet went by God's Order to the Potter's House, who wrought a Work on the Wheels, and the Vessels that he made of Clay was marred in the Hand of the Potter, so he made it again another Vessel as seemed good to him. Then the Word of the Lord came to the Prophet, saying, O House of *Israel*, cannot I do with you as the Potter, saith the Lord? Behold as the Clay is in the Potter's Hand, so are ye in mine Hand, O House of *Israel*. What follows there confirms this Explication, where God says, at what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation to pull it down, if it turn and repent I also will change my Purpose: And when I speak of building a Nation, if it do Evil I will not benefit them. The full Import of the Passage then is no more, than, this: That Mankind are in the Hand of God, as the Lump of Clay in the Potter's. As he can frame out of that a Vessel of more or less honourable Use, so can God out of Mankind make Nations with more or less Privileges: And as, when the Vessel designed for Honour becomes marred in the Turning the Potter can apply it to another Form, so, when a Nation favoured and privileged has rendered itself unworthy such Honour, God can dispose of it in a less advantageous Manner.

These are the principal Scriptures brought to prove, that God, with respect to another Life, has had

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had no Regard to what Men could do or have done, but has chosen some Men to be happy for ever antecedent to their Birth and reprobated some to be miserable for ever, and that before they were born, so that it never was in the Power of the one to be saved, or the other to be damn'd. But these Texts appear to have no such Meaning, and therefore this Doctrine is not founded in, but is contrary to plain Passages of Scripture, as well as Reason, and consequently is not true, and therefore cannot be made an Objection to the divine Impartiality, which I have been contending for.

I am, Yours, &c.

PART II.

Mr. HOOKER,

THE Account, given in my last, of God's dispensing the Goods of another Life with an exact Regard to the Degrees of Virtue in every Man, and in proportion to his Improvement under the Means afforded, is objected to by those who think, that, as God is not obliged, so he has not observed the same Conduct in the Distribution of Rewards, that he has in the Infliction of Punishments. That in the latter he has acted by the Rule of the strictest Justice, but in the former with

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the Liberty of a generous Master who gives to all his Servants enough and to spare, but to some more than to others. That, as in the heavenly Host he has raised some to Angels, some to Archangels, all glorious, but some more glorious than others, though they all were alike nothing, before he called them into Being; so among Men, beheld in an equal Light of Desert or Demerit, he hath given to some the Means of becoming happier than others in the future World; and, in a word, has appropriated Heaven, as it denotes the highest State of Happiness, to good Men whom, without any View to their deserving such a Favour above others, he called to be Christians; while he has left it in the Power of the rest of Mankind, according to their Behaviour, to avoid Hell, and rise to Happiness, but of a lower Nature. This Opinion is clear of both the shocking Absurdities of the Predestinarian, *viz.* that God out of Mankind has doomed some to be eternally wretched, and others to be eternally happy, without leaving it in the Power of either to alter their Condition. It only asserts, that God will inflict proper Punishments on those who have fitted themselves for Vessels of Destruction; but all others, who have endeavoured to do their Duty and please him, he frames into Vessels of different Sizes and Capacities, all of which shall be full of Happiness, but yet one hold more than the other: That the Christian shall be more blessed than the Heathen, though they both labour alike under the Means afforded them; That the Man with five Talents cannot with his utmost Diligence make himself as high in the heavenly Mansions, as the Man with ten, who uses his utmost Diligence; but that in the Course to Glory Men are like the two Wheels placed

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placed behind one the other in the same Carriage, though they run with equal Speed, the one will ever be at the same Distance before the other.

What may be brought in support of this Opinion is, that God, provided he does unjustly and hardly by none, can do what he will with his own, as appears from his Interrogation of that kind to the Labourers in the Vineyard, some of whom blamed his not having regard to Work in the Payment that he made. The Rewards of another Life, eternal Happiness and Heaven, are Matters of entire Favour, and God's own in the greatest Propriety of Speech. To teach us this, the Scriptures every where call them the Gift, and the free Gift, not of Works, but of Grace; for the Wages of Sin is Death, but the Gift of God eternal Life. And as eternal Life and the highest Heaven are the free Gift of God, and consequently disposible as he thinks proper, so he seems to have annexed them to Christianity, and made them the distinguishing Rewards of those who believed in his Son. For this Reason our Saviour is said to have brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel, which is called elsewhere the Power of God to Salvation. Hence Faith and Baptism are mentioned as necessary Qualifications for the attaining this Salvation: As when it is said, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned: Without Faith it is impossible to please God: And again, God gave his only begotten Son, to the end, that all that believed in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life. Christians are called in the sacred Page the adopted, those in whom is the Spirit of God, by which they are Sons, and if Sons, then Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ. Now here is mention of

traordinary Privileges and high Advantages for the Called to the State of Christianity above other Men, for which they are directed to be particularly thankful, in Praises and all the Fruits of holy Obedience. But how can all this be, if the same Heaven belongs to those who name the Name of Christ, and those who are Strangers to it, provided they all use equal Diligence under their respective Dispenfations to improve the Means afforded?

As this Scheme contains nothing in it, that implies, God will punish any one for what he cannot help, or will not reward every one above what he can deserve; I should not scruple to subscribe to it, could I see the same Evidence for it, which some have thought they saw in Scripture, which alone conveys to us the certain Notices of a future State, at least of the Eternity and Happiness of it. In this Case I should say, there was nothing personal in this Disposition, but that it served some great Purposes of Propriety and Wisdom, which I was not able to discern: I should not in any wise dare to reply against God. For that he can do what he will with his own, is most certain: And that eternal Life, Heaven and Glory, are his own, his great, his unmerited, his free Gift, is equally clear; nothing, the best of Men can do, being able to raise any Claim like it. But the Question is not here concerning what the Almighty can do in these Matters, which we can never know, but what he has done, and will do, as far as may be collected from the Holy Scripture, the only Light, by which we can read these Ways of God.

Now the sacred Page sets forth God to us, as dealing equally in Matters of Moment with his Creatures on Earth, and not respecting any thing in them, but Virtue; as the God and Father of
all;

all; the God, not of one People, but of the *Gentiles*, that is, all the Nations of the World: God of all Nations, that is, doing good to all Nations, as, in That Place of the Gospel where it is brought to prove a Life after Death, the *God of Abraham* implies the *Benefactor* of *Abraham* who makes Him happy. Eternal Life in the highest Heaven is his free Gift; but why may not this Gift extend to all? since Christ, in whom, and by whose Merits it was obtained, died for all, as the Scriptures plainly teach us. Eternal Life or Happiness, being more than the most sanguine Man could promise himself, was but imperfectly known, or rather guessed at before our Saviour, who therefore might very well be said to have brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Gospel. The Promise of Heaven is so far annexed to the Christian State, that they who embrace and obey the Gospel have the Assurance of it, and therefore have the Comfort, the Joy of knowing that they cannot fail of it: But others may have it too, though it is not promised them, and may have the Advantages of the Covenant, though they are not made acquainted with it. We do not scruple to assert that there will be one Hell for the Wicked of all Ages, Countries, and Dispensations, with more or fewer Stripes, according to their Offences: Why then should we fear to allow one Heaven for all the Virtuous, under whatever Law they were appointed to live, with many Mansions of Bliss in it, to suit with the Difference of their Improvements in Grace? If it be argued, that the Conditions of obtaining Heaven, Faith and Baptism, seem to confine it to Christians, since none, but they, can be supposed to perform the one or the other: The Answer is, that where the Gospel came, there these Things

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Things were necessary for attaining to Life, and therefore are set down as Conditions of it in the Gospel: None, but such, can claim Life by virtue of a Promise and a Covenant; but yet others may have it, if they perform all the Conditions that were in their Power. Some Faith indeed is required of every one in order to Salvation; for the Scripture says, without Faith it is impossible to please God: But then the same Scripture instructs, it is such a Faith as all Men may have, that is, to believe that God is, and that he is a Rewarder of all those that diligently seek him. Where Christ is made known, a distinct Belief in him, and the Performance of Baptism, and all his other Commandments, are necessary to Salvation. In those, who have not heard of Christ, Faith in God is required, and particularly in his Mercy, and living in Obedience to all his known Laws, joined with an humble Readiness to hear further Revelations of his Will, whenever he is pleased to make them, and behave agreeably to them. Such was the first Faith of even *Abraham* himself, as the Apostle tells us, which was imputed to him for Righteousness; such a Faith, as made him depend on and listen to God at every Call, leave his Country, and hope against Hope about the Son whom God had promised him. Thus he became the Father of the Faithful, and was indulged a View into the Day of the Messiah, and rejoiced to see it. Some of the Benefits of Christianity are not confined to the Professors of it: One of the Benefits, purchased by Christ, is the Resurrection of the Body: But shall *Christians* therefore only rise? Quite otherwise the Apostle—We shall all appear: All that are in the Graves, or without a Grave, shall hear his Voice, *Gentiles*, as well as *Christians*,

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ans, the one to be judged without a positive Law, the other with one. Shall there be one Judge of Christians, and another of those that are not so? Otherwise Scripture—All Judgment is left to the Son. In that Day, when all are to be judged, shall there be any lower Region, any middle Place between Heaven and Hell? This is not the Language of the sacred Page, but after Examination, they, whoever they are, that have done well, shall go into Life everlasting, and they that have done ill, into everlasting Fire. The Assistance of God's Spirit is another Privilege of the Gospel State: This gives Sonship, and that Inheritance. But the same Spirit, which was so plentifully poured out on the first Teachers and Professors of the Gospel, laboured to reform the World long before: For *St. Peter* tells us, it was by the same Spirit, which quickened Christ, that the Disobedient were preached to in the Days of *Noah*. There is frequent Intimation in Holy Scripture of Degrees of Glory, but the same Passages instruct us, they are not proportioned to the Qualities of Grace, but to the Degrees of Improvement. The two Parables of the Talents and Pounds in *St. Matthew* and *Luke*, throw a full Light on this Matter. In the former Evangelist, the Master delivers to his Servants Talents, to one five, to another two, and to another one. When the Lord came to reckon with them, the two first Stewards had doubled their Sums: They both appeared to have done what they could, the Diligence was the same to make four out of two, as ten out of five. Though the Sums therefore, which they brought, were different, yet their Industry in Improvement appearing the same, they were in the same Words commended, and without any Distinction

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stinction admitted into the same Joy of their Lord. When he, that received but one Talent, came, he was chid and cast into Darknes : But was it for having had but one Talent ? Nothing less : The Lord, who inflicts the Punishment, gives the Reason of it, because he had not put his Money to the Ex-changers, that it might have been received with Usury. But still more clearly to the Purpose is that other Parable, in *St. Luke*, of a Nobleman going abroad, and leaving with his ten Servants ten Pounds to occupy in his Absence, to every one a Pound. At his Return came one Servant, who had improved one Pound into ten : He is com-mended, and set over ten Cities. Another came, who had made his one Pound five : He is not so much commended, but is set over only five Cities : The Rewards of both bore an exact Proportion to their respective Improvements. The next, who brought his one Pound as he received it, met the Sentence of him who had done so by his one Talent :

Since then, as there is one God of all, so we learn from Scripture there is one Saviour of all, the Benefits of whose Incarnation extend to all : Since we know from Revelation only of two after States, those of Heaven and Hell, with Degrees of Punishment and Reward in each exactly pro-portioned, not to the original Abundance or Want of Graces, but to the Improvement or Abuse of them : There does not appear to me Reason to conclude with the Objection in the Beginning of this Head, that God has set some Men so forward in the Race to Glory, that others cannot overtake them, though they use an equal Speed in order to do it ; or, to speak out of Figure, that he has annexed the highest Heaven of Happiness to the
good

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good Behaviour of Men, whom he has placed under one particular Dispensation, but denies it to the best of Men under any other : But on the contrary, it is possible, he may observe as perfect an Equality in dispensing Matters of mere Favour, as in Things of strict Justice.

I shall conclude the Subject with a short Recollection of what has been said upon it. I have shewn, that the making a partial God is one Mark of Error, to be found in all the false Religions in the World in every Age of it : But that the sacred Writings represent the Deity in another and more amiable Light, that of a common Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of Mankind, who respects nothing outward and accidental, either in his Regard and Esteem of any of his reasonable Creatures ; or in his Distribution of good and evil Things to them ; or in the Acceptance of their Services ; or lastly, in the Judgment that he will pass upon them at the last Day. I have endeavoured to remove the Difficulties, which seem to lie in the Way of this Assertion, arising from the apparent unequal Dispensation of Good and Evil in this Life ; from God's chusing the *Jewish* Nation for his People, above all other Nations in the Earth, and afterwards, from the Revelation of the Gospel to one Country, and not to another, to one sooner, to another later, to one with greater Evidence of Miracles than to another ; from the Doctrine of absolute Predestination to Life, and Reprobation to Death eternal ; and lastly, from God's observing one Rule with respect to Punishments, and another with respect to Rewards in the future State.

I am, Yours, &c.

*The Duty of all Christians to read the
Scriptures, and to use all other Sub-
ordinate Means, which Providence
has afforded them, towards the
Knowledge of the Doctrines and
Duties of RELIGION.*

IN TWO

SERMONS

PREACH'D AT

WARE in HERTFORDSHIRE.

Day of all Christians to read the
Scriptures, and to use all other sub-
ordinate Means, which Providence
has afforded them, towards the
Knowledge of the Doctrine and
Duties of Religion.



SERMONS

PREACHED AT

WARR in HERTFORDSHIRE.

TO THE

Inhabitants of *Ware.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

I HAVE lately put into your Hands a Sermon which I have Reason to think, has done some Good among you, though not so much as I could wish. Its not producing a greater Influence, this only shews how much it was wanted; but the Fruit which it has apparently brought forth encourages me to sow again in hopes that my second Harvest will be a more plentiful one. The two Sermons, which I here recommend to your serious and repeated Perusal, were made for you, and preached to you; but Discourses from the Pulpit, though heard with Attention, and received with Approbation, will soon slip the Memory, unless People would immediately take more care, than they generally do, to recollect them, and consider them. The Subject of these Discourses being of very great Consequence to your Improvement in Religion and Virtue, as your faithful Monitor and Friend, I earnestly desire you to weigh them well;

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and, then, by God's Blessing, I will answer for your being the better for them; but if you only bestow upon them one slight and hasty Reading, they may give you an Hour's Amusement, but do you very little lasting Good. I will on other Occasions, which shall seem to require it, take this Method of bringing Instruction home to your Houses that you may have Time to think of it at your Leisure. The Furtherance of your eternal Happiness is what I have really at Heart. Indeed, the Pleasure of endeavouring to promote the Welfare of others is almost the only Pleasure that a Life of Fatigue and Disappointment and Trouble has afforded, or is ever likely to afford to,

Your Faithful,

And Affectionate

Friend and Servant,

W. WEBSTER.

PART I.

LUKE xvi. 8.

*The Children of this World are in
their Generation wiser than the
Children of Light.*

IT is an usual Phrase in the Bible to call a Person the *Son* or *Child* of any thing when he partakes much of its *Nature* and *Qualities*. Such as have acquired *virtuous* Habits and *divine* Dispositions are stiled, *Children of God*; while those who partake of a *diabolical* Temper take their Name from him whom they imitate and resemble, and are called, *the Children of the Devil*. The *earthly-minded*, who make the Things of *this World* their *chief Aim* and *Study*, are called, the CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD; and those who, being enlightened with the Knowledge of an immortal Happiness in another Life, and profess themselves to be only in a State of *Probation here*, are distinguished by the Title of the CHILDREN OF LIGHT, because they are, or ought to be, Partakers of that heavenly Frame of Mind which is the genuine Product of such a Belief, and in *Scripture* is expressed by *Light*.

The *Children of this World*, who mind *earthly Things*, are said to be *wiser* than the *Children of Light*, who are supposed by their *Profession* to have their Hopes full of Immortality, to have their greatest Treasure in Reversion.—Wiser! But in what Sense? Not *absolutely* wiser. For it cannot be consistent with *true Wisdom*, which always chuses that which is *best upon the whole*, to place our *chief Happiness* in *this Life*, when we have such *clear and strong Proofs* of a future State of more perfect and more lasting Felicity than any thing that is *temporal and earthly* can be.—But they are *wiser in their Generation*; wiser for *this World*, than the *Children of Light* are for the *next Life*. They act more *consistently* with their *Principles*, and are more provident to secure, or obtain the Possession of those Things wherein they place their *chief Happiness*, than *Christians* are to make their *heavenly Calling and Election* sure in that *endless State of perfect Bliss* which they declare their Belief of.

But I do not intend in my following Discourse to draw the Comparison between the Conduct of two *different sorts* of Men, but between the Conduct of the *same Men* acting *differently*, and *inconsistently with themselves*; wherein I shall make it appear, that, in respect to the Concerns of *Religion* their Behaviour is directly opposite to all the Rules of *Prudence* that they themselves observe in the Management of their *Temporal Affairs*. And, This I apprehend to have been our Saviour's main Drift, though the *Parable*, which introduces the Remark, represents the *Children of this World* and the *Children of Light* under distinct Characters.

The Observation is still as true and seasonable as it was in our Saviour's Time, *human Nature*
and

and *human Conduct* continuing much the same that they then were. Though the World be grown so much older, Mankind, I fear, are not much wiser than they were. The Enquiry, therefore, is not likely to prove to our Credit and Satisfaction, but by the Grace of God, concurring with our honest Application of it, it may turn greatly to our future Advantage. When we are made sensible how *inconsistently*, how *absurdly* we have conducted ourselves, we cannot help being *concerned* and *ashamed*; but if our Sorrow and Shame produce their natural Effects in making us resolve to act more *wisely* and *consistently* for the future, I may say with the Apostle, *I shall not repent that I made you sorry.*

If I intended to carry the Comparison through every Instance of *worldly Wisdom*, it would be necessary to enumerate all the several *Maxims* by which Men of the best Understandings conduct themselves in the Prosecution of their several Schemes of Life; but my Design is *limited* to the *grand Article* of *all*; the *primary* and *fundamental* Point of *secular Wisdom*. Upon This only I purpose to enlarge; and when I shall have executed my intended Plan, you will see that it is, by itself, an *entire one*; and, I hope, you will *feel* that it is an useful one.

In whatever Circumstances of Life we consider Men, let their *Trade*, or *Profession*, be what it will, it is the *leading Principle* of all, to be careful to understand the *Nature* of their particular Business. For this Purpose People are put out Apprentices, in order to be instructed in the proper Methods of carrying it on to Advantage; and when they become Masters themselves, they are studious to improve their Knowledge in their

Trade by Observation and Conversation ; and the more diligent and acute they are in getting an Insight into the best manner of making, of buying or selling Goods to the greatest Profit, and with the greatest Safety ; and the more artful they are in sifting others of known Skill in the same Trade, the more shrewd and notable they are always reckoned, and the more successful they generally are in Business. Take any of those Men, who are intent upon thriving in the World, and observe whether they do not make it their particular Care to associate with others of the same Occupation who have the Reputation of being the greatest Proficients in it, in order to try whether they cannot learn something from them. If there be any Person who is reckoned to have a particular Secret, by the Means of which he excels others, see how assiduous the rest, who have any Share of Prudence, are to get acquainted with him ; how officious to oblige him ; how watchful to take the most favourable Opportunity to persuade him to communicate his Skill.—Or, if there were any *Book* that treated largely and most accurately of the Methods of improving any kind of Business, would not every discreet Man, in that Way of Business, procure the Book, if possible, and study it thoroughly, till he were sure he could put the Rules in Practice ; and if there were any Part which he apprehended to be of Consequence that he did not understand, would he not be careful to get some Instruction from others of more Knowledge and Judgment ? It is the same as to any Profession by which Men hope to rise to Wealth or Honour. Is not this the Conduct of all that have any tolerable Share of *worldly Wisdom* ? And a very commendable Conduct, no doubt, it is.
For,

For, a Man that does *not* understand his Trade or Profession can never expect much Success in it; and the *better* he understands it the more successful he may reasonably expect to be; but no Knowledge can be acquired without using the proper Means; a Principal of which is the Experience of others who have gone before us.—Now, let us view these Men in another Light. Let us examine their Behaviour in respect to the great Business of *Religion*; their *Christian Profession*; and see whether they conduct themselves by the same Rules of *Prudence* and *good Sense*. I presume, it will be granted me, that a Man's Proficiency in *Religion* and *Christian Perfection* will be in Proportion to his *Knowledge* in *Religion*, and the necessary Means of Improvement in it. It is impossible for us to do our Duty any farther than we *understand* it; for *Practice* implies *Knowledge*, and every *End* has its particular *Means* adapted to it, without which it cannot naturally be attained.—What is *Religion* but the Conformity of our Wills to the Will of God? And how are we to come at the Knowledge of God's *Will*, but from his *Nature*, and from his *written Word*, explained by those who have had the best Opportunities of understanding it, and whose proper Business it is to instruct others. Men of *Letters*, who have had Leisure and Ability to make themselves acquainted with *Books* and have been accustomed to an *argumentative* Way of Thinking, may know a good deal of the *natural* and *moral* Attributes of God from his *Works*, and of the Course of his *Providence* from the *Histories* of the several Kingdoms of the World; and by enquiring into our own Natures, and seeing the Relation that we stand in to our Maker and Governor and to one another, they may discover a

natural *Fitness* or *Propriety* in some Thoughts and Actions, and an *Unfitness* or *Impropriety* in others. This is one Method which *Philosophers*, *Divines*, and *Moralists* have taken, in order to find out the Will of God and our Duty to him, because whatever we can shew, from the *Nature of Things*, to be *fit* and *reasonable* in *itself*, we may, from its *natural Fitness* and *Reasonableness*, infer that it is agreeable to the Mind of an infinitely wise and good Being.—But, as many of those who hear me have neither the Opportunity of reading such Authors, nor the Capacity of making the proper Use of such *speculative* Writings, I shall only insist upon those Means of Information which are in *every one's* Power; and examine whether Mankind in general be as careful to make a due Use of *them*, as they are to inform themselves of such Matters as relate to their *worldly* Interest.

The *Scriptures* are the *first* and *great* Means of Information in the Knowledge of God and our Duty.—In those sacred Writings we have conveyed to us the Knowledge of the *Divine Nature* and *Will*; what he is in *himself*; what he is to *us*; and what it is that he requires from us; and all this, not in any uncertain or difficult Method of abstruse Argumentation, but by an express and plain Revelation of himself, as to what we are to *believe* and *practise*. *There* his Attributes are displayed, his Dispensations to Mankind set forth, his Precepts laid down for the Rule of our Actions, his Terrors denounced, and his Promises proclaimed; in order to persuade us to Obedience. Moreover, *There* we have both for our Direction and Encouragement, both to instruct and animate us, the Examples of holy Men and Women in all Ages of the World; but, above all, we have the

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unerring Pattern of the spotless *Jesus*, the Blessed Author of our Religion; his Meekness under Indignities; his Patience under Sufferings; his Charity in forgiving Injuries; his unwearied Benevolence in doing Good. —What an inexhaustable, what an inestimable Treasure of Knowledge must be contained in a Book that was dictated by the infallible Spirit of God, for such noble Purposes as the Instruction of all Mankind, in every thing that is necessary to their eternal Salvation! How full of Wonders and Delight! How must it raise the Attention, awaken the Curiosity, and improve the Disposition of every thoughtful Mind!

Is it possible to be conversant with the History of *God's Dispensations* without being affected by them? The many Declarations and Instances of his Anger against sinful Nations and sinful Men, but, especially, his dreadful Denunciations of Vengeance to be executed in the World to come, will be the strongest Dissuasive from Vice. The general Promises of Favour to good Men and the many Instances of his Goodness to particular Saints, will animate your Obedience, and raise an holy Confidence in God under the greatest Dangers and Distress. But a close and frequent Attention to the Promise of that exceeding great Reward which awaits good Men in *Heaven*, will fire your Minds with the most vigorous Resolutions and the warmest Transports of joyful Hope. With *St. Paul* you will boldly fight the good Fight of Faith, and with him, too, desire to be dissolv'd, that you may enter into Glory. The Accounts of *God's Mercy* will raise the drooping Spirits of a desponding Penitent, while his *Purity* will convince the Presumptuous that *Impurity* can never dwell in his Presence. The Declarations of his

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Immutability and *Veracity* are a Security to good Men that his *Promises* shall never fail, and an unanswerable Proof to the Wicked that his *Threatnings* will most assuredly be executed.

But there is one Part of these *Sacred Books* which I would recommend to every serious *Christian* for his most familiar *Acquaintance*. The Book of *Psalms* has something in it adapted to every one's Condition; and every thing in it is as moving and affecting as it is possible. If he celebrates the *Praises* of God, he does it in such joyful, such exalted, and such rapturous Strains, as must elevate the Heart of every Reader that has any Passions. If he makes *Confession of his Sins*, he does it in such a tender Manner as must melt the most Obdurate into Tears of Repentance and Resolutions of Amendment. In his *Thanksgivings* you may perceive how his Heart glows with *Gratitude*, how he labours to express the strong Sense which he feels of the Divine Goodness. When he pours forth his Complaints in his Distress, and begs the Protection of God, he expresses such a perfect Resignation and firm Reliance on him for Deliverance, as is apt to make the Reader, if he has any good Dispositions, *ashamed* to harbour in his Thoughts the least Discontent, or Despondency. When you hear him *longing* and *panting* after God, *like as the Hart desireth the Water-Brooks*, how can you forbear taking up his impatient Wish for an Opportunity of attending *publick Worship*, and saying, with him, *When shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?* There is in every Picture, which this pious Painter has drawn, a peculiar *Softness*, even in those Parts which have the greatest Strength and Force of Sentiment, or Expression; which I ascribe partly to his natural Disposition,

position, and partly to his *Troubles*, which have a great Tendency towards calming and softening the Mind.—When I consider these and many more Excellencies in this inestimable Treasure of *Piety* and *Devotion*, I am not surprized at what I have heard, of one of the most learned Men of his Time in *France*, who, on his Death-bed, wish'd for *one Year more, that he might spend* it in reading the *Psalms of David*. My *Brethren*, we are all, at present, in Possession of the Opportunity which this unhappy great Man too long slighted, and at last in vain wished for. Let us *All* subscribe to his Opinion of their Value, but let none of us copy after his Neglect of them. For my own part, I have them bound up by themselves, I carry them always in my Pocket, and resolve never to live a Day, while I am *capable* of reading, without reading some Part of them.

And *we*, in *these Kingdoms*, God be praised! enjoy a Blessing which is denied to the greatest Part of *Christendom*, the free Use of the *Scriptures* in our native Language; and, as to all *essential* Points of *Faith*, or *Præctice*, faithfully translated from the Original.—I would ask, then, what might naturally be expected from Mankind in this Case, supposing them to follow the same Maxims of *Wisdom* and *Prudence*, which all *wise* and *prudent* People observe in respect to their *worldly* and *sensual* Affairs?

In the first place, would not every such Person, if capable of reading and buying the Bible, be as conversant in it as possible, and attentive to mark, particularly, those Passages that are of most Importance; to lay them up in his Memory, and to imprint them the most strongly upon his Mind, that they may always lie uppermost in his Thoughts
for

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for common Use upon every Occasion? To make them, as holy *David* did, his constant Study? To meditate upon them Day and Night?--I do not mean that he would do nothing else but read his *Bible*; but, that he would be careful and glad to take all convenient Opportunities of contracting the greatest Intimacy with the most useful and entertaining Book that ever was publish'd in the World; and, accordingly, if his Situation in Life allow'd him but *little* Leisure for reading, would he not be the more careful to employ *that little* in reading what is infinitely better worth reading than any other Book whatsoever? If he were as *wise* and *prudent* in his *spiritual* Affairs, as *wise* Men are generally in their *temporal* ones, he would be as diligent to inform himself of *religious* Truths and the Methods of Improvement in *Christian Perfection*, as *They* are to understand and improve their *Trade*, or *Profession*; and, the *Bible* being infinitely the *BEST Means* of Information, as to religious Truth and Duties, he would be sure not to *fail studying it with the utmost Care and Attention*.

You see, I endeavour to speak to your *Understandings*, to your *common Sense*, upon your *own allowed* Maxims of Conduct; and to shew you how inconsistently you act with yourselves: How *wisely* and *prudently* in Things, comparatively, of *no* Moment; how foolishly and absurdly in the Business of *Eternal Life* and *Death*. For, my Brethren, I appeal to *yourselves*. Have you been as careful to read and understand your *Bible*, to acquire *Spiritual* Knowledge, and inform yourselves of your *Duty*, as to understand the Nature of your *secular* Business, and *sensual* Schemes?----- Have you *ever* read it over regularly as you read
over

over other Books? Have you read it with a Degree of Attention and awful Regard suitable to the Dignity of the Author and the great Importance of the subject Matter of it?—On the contrary, are there not many of you who scarce ever look into it, at all, with any serious Purpose; some, who have not thought it worth their while perhaps ever to get one.—And I ask you to tell me fairly and honestly.—Is this Conduct of a Piece with your Behaviour in common Life? Is it not altogether absurd and senseless? I am now speaking to every one who is capable of reading, even though they be employed all the Week in getting their daily Bread; for every one is, or ought to be, at leisure to spend some Part of his Time in reading it. And if Men had a just Notion of the great Value and Excellency of their *Bible*, they would *steal* all possible Opportunities of reading small Portions of it. They would not only be convinced that it is their Duty and Interest to do it, but the *Pleasure* that they would take in reading it, (if they could but persuade themselves to read it habitually and frequently) would be a sufficient Inducement. In-
 somuch that the Psalmist makes a Taste and Relish for the *holy Scriptures*, a sure Token by which we may know a good Man. The Words of a learned Prelate (Bishop Atterbury) of our Church on this Subject being very apt and fine, I shall give you them --- says he, “ Another Token of our
 “ *Sincerity* in Religion is, when we delight to
 “ read and have a Relish of the Scriptures;
 “ when we find somewhat more in *them* than in
 “ mere *human* Writings, and are apt to settle
 “ into a pious Composure of Mind while we are
 “ perusing them; when we come to them with
 Satisfaction

" Satisfaction and Eagerness, and are uneasy under any long Discontinuance of our Conversation with them.---'Tis true, it may sometimes happen that a Person of a sound and sincere Piety shall read the Holy Scriptures without being much warmed, or affected by them. He may be under an Indisposition and Languor of Mind; the Business, or Pleasures of Life and wordly Objects may now and then take Possession of his Heart, and shut the Door against scriptural Impressions; but then this is not a *common* Case; he is for the *most part* well disposed towards this divine Employment. But, if a Man can frequently peruse the Scriptures without any Degree of sensible Emotion and Concern, without being touch'd by the Matter of them, or aw'd by the Majestick Manner of Expression, which distinguishes them from all other Writings, this is as sure an Indication of a sick Soul, as a Palate which does not relish the most savoury Meats, is of a diseased Body."---Thus far this pious and learned Preacher. Wherefore, if you really have any Honour and Veneration for your Maker you will pay a due Regard to his holy Word; as much more Regard to it, than to any other Writings, as it is of greater Authority, being the Word of infinite Wisdom, spoken to us by the Creator and Governor and Judge of the whole World; as containing Matters not only excellent in themselves, like many fine Compositions of *Human* Invention, but of the last Moment to our Happiness; to our Happiness, not only *here*, but *hereafter*; to *endless* Ages. If all these Circumstances do not claim the highest Veneration and the closest Attention from us, *nothing can*. And, since

since you *do* believe the *Divine Inspiration* of the Scriptures, do not act so absurd and *stupid* a Part as to slight them; and slight them you *do*, if you neglect to read them and meditate upon them. If you have a sincere Desire of growing in Grace, and making a Progress in *Christian* Perfection, be studious to use this great means of Improvement; which is so necessary a one that if you wilfully omit to use it, you cannot expect that you shall make any considerable Advances in Piety and Virtue; and so efficacious a one that whoever makes himself intimately acquainted with the Word of God will in Proportion to the *Degree* of his Intimacy with it, grow every Day a better Man. If at the Day of Judgment you would enter into Life, the *Bible* is the *Charter* which must give you a *Title* to it: The *Bible* is the *infallible Guide* that must direct you into the right way that leadeth thither: The *Bible* is the *sweet Companion* that will make your Journey comfortable and agreeable. You profess to believe these things, and let your Conduct be agreeable to your Professions. Imitate the Wisdom of the Children of this World, and be as industrious to draw Heavenly Knowledge out of this Divine Fountain, as they are to acquire a thorough Insight into the Nature of wordly Affairs and the right Method of carrying them on.

But *without* considering the *Bible* as the *Rule* of our *Faith and Practice*, but only as a Composition containing Matters of *Improvement* and *Entertainment*, it might recommend itself to the Attention and Admiration of Persons of the most accurate Judgment and the most elegant Taste. It is the most *ancient* Book in the World. No other Book contains such a *Variety* of Matter.

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There are the noblest Sentiments, the most elevated Thoughts, the most admirable Maxims of *human Prudence*, and the best Directions for the making ourselves happy in *this Life*. Its *Beauties* are equal to its *Usefulness*. The *Manner*, as well as the *Matter*, speaks it to be above *human Invention*. There is, throughout the whole, such an inimitable *Simplicity*, that let a Person read it ever so often, the oftener he reads it the more he will admire it, and read it with the more Pleasure: There are the most glowing *poetical Images*, the most lively *Descriptions*, the most apt and delicate *Similes*, the most affecting Strokes of *Oratory*, every thing that is admired in other Writings, and in much greater Perfection. A Man must carry the strongest Prepossessions, as well as *Infidelity* with him, if he can read over the Books of *Job*, of *David*, of *Isaiah*, or of *St. Paul*, without Admiration and Delight; without having his Heart warmed, his Passions enflamed, his Mind raised above itself. I will venture to say, if the *Bible* were the Work of any Person but their *Maker*, and related to any thing else than *Religion*, it would be read and admired, by the scornfullest Wits, as the most excellent and beautiful Composition in the Universe. But what, my Brethren, can I say to *Those* (and many such there are) who profess their Belief of its *Divine Inspiration* and its *Infinite Importance* to their Happiness, and yet neglect the reading it with a suitable Attention and Frequency? The *Infidels* only shew great Want of Taste in this Instance, arising from their *Prejudices*; but such *Believers* act with as little *Sense* as the People in *Bedlam*. In the Name of *Common Sense* let them either *disown* their *Faith*, or act more consistently with

with it. It is a sufficient Reproach to the *Infidels* that their *Infidelity* should so far blind the Understandings of Men, pretending to a superior Degree of *Impartiality* and *Freedom* of Thought, that they cannot discern the greatest Beauties; but a *Believer* without a *Relish*, without the greatest *Admiration*, without the highest *Veneration* for his *Bible*, by which he expects to be saved; a *Believer*, who does not *eagerly desire*, who does not *greedily enjoy* so great a *Blessing* and *Comfort*, so *necessary* a *Means* of *Happiness*; he is --- so astonishing a *Monster* of *Folly* and *Madness*, that I can only express my *Admiration*; and beg of God, by his Grace, to cure all such *disordered Minds*. What I have to say farther must be deferred to the next Opportunity. To God the Father, &c.

P.S. As this Sermon may chance to fall into the Hands of some Persons of *Learning*, I take the Liberty to suggest an Observation that respects *Them*. The *Generality* of Mankind have neither Leisure nor Capacity for the Perusal of *Commentators* and *other Studies* that may be subservient to the Knowledge of the Scriptures. *Deep* and *critical* Points are not their Concern, because they lie out of their reach. Matters more obvious to common Apprehensions, and of general Use, are the things, and the only things which it is their Duty to understand. Not that I mean to lay it down for a Maxim that none but *Scholars* should ever look into *Comments* or *Paraphrases*. No body can understand the Bible too well, because the better Men understand it, the more they may improve by it, and receive the more Pleasure from it; and there are many Books

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upon the *Bible* which Persons of good natural Sense may make a good Use of *without* the Help of a *liberal* Education. Such as have been bred up to *Letters*, if they have a *religious* Turn of Mind, will out of Inclination be inquisitive---And, as to Those whose particular Employment it is to explain it to others, there can be no Doubt about their Obligation to study it *critically*, and to search as far as they can into those Parts which are of the most difficult Interpretation, and the hardest to be understood.----But (with great Difference and Respect I make the Observation) a Man may bestow much Time and Pains in the Study of the the Scriptures, as a *Scholar*, with an Intent to understand the Meaning of the Text, and to find out the Matter contained therein, yet unless he uses himself to read it daily as a *private Christian*, with a View to those *ordinary practical* Uses, which belong to them in common with the rest of the World, he may fill his Head with *intellectual* Knowledge, without improving his *Heart*, or becoming a *better Man*. I hope, I shall be excused the Freedom if I take Notice that this Remark more particularly concerns *young Clergymen*, who by this Method would acquire a greater Readiness and Facility in *preaching*, and be furnished with proper Matter. By this Habit the Scripture Language, which is the most affecting, would become natural to them; and their Discourses would breathe an Air of *Piety* that would help more towards the Spiritual Improvement of their Hearers than the greatest Embellishments of Composition. A familiar Acquaintance with the *Bible* not only makes the most *pious Christians*, but the most *instructive* and *edifying Preachers*. And if they were to make a *Common-Place* for

for themselves, it would be of much more Service to them than the most accurate one already made to their Hands. Nay, if *every one* were to try to make *Extracts*, ranged under *proper Heads*, they would find their Account in it. They would read with more Attention; their Knowledge would be more distinct; every thing would be imprinted the more strongly on the Mind, and be more ready for Use.

P A R T II.

LUKE xvi. 8.

The Children of this World are in their generation wiser than the Children of Light.

IN my former Discourse I observ'd to you, that the *leading Maxim* among *wise and prudent Men* in every *Profession and Business* of Life is, to be careful, in the first Place, thoroughly to understand their particular Calling and the Methods of carrying it on to the best Advantage; and, consequently, that if Men were as *wise and prudent* in respect to *Religion and another World*,

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they would be as careful to use all the Means, which Providence has put into their power, of informing themselves of the *Nature* of their *Christian Profession*, in order to *secure* and *encrease* their *future Happiness*.---And, the holy *Scriptures* being the great Fountain of *Divine Knowledge*, the *Rule* both of our *Faith* and *Practice*, I told you, (and common Sense tells you the same Thing) that the first Point of *Heavenly Wisdom* is, to be as conversant as we can with the *Bible*, and to read it always with the utmost Regard and Attention, as it is the Word of our *God*, and the most excellent and useful Book that ever was published; but that shameful Experience shews a most strange Contempt for it amongst some People and Neglect of it in others, who profess themselves *Christians* and *Believers* of its *Divine Inspiration*; the latter, seldom looking into it; and the former, reading it only in order to raise Objections, and turn it into Ridicule. The Abuse of so inestimable a Blessing gives us too much Reason to apprehend that God, in just Punishment of our Ingratitude and Folly, may remove our Candlestick again from us; and the present State of *Europe* looks as if he intended soon to do so, by subjecting us to the Power of those who will lock up the Scriptures, and not suffer the *Laitie* to have the Use of them.

But, tho' the *Bible* be the *Rule* both of *Faith* and *Practice*, yet God's Providence hath provided other subordinate Means of Information in *Christian Knowledge*. A *Rule* may be a very sufficient one, and yet some Instruction may be required in order to know how to apply it rightly. In the Scriptures are contained all the religious Truths which we are required to believe; but then

then in order to understand the full and true Meaning of them some Assistance may be necessary, as well as to understand the Sense of any other Author. Indeed, as the Scriptures are intended for the Use of all sorts of Capacities, it is reasonable to suppose that the Wisdom and Goodness of God has so adapted it that it shall be in the Power of every *Christian* of common Understanding to inform himself of every thing that is necessary for him to know as a *Condition* of *Salvation*. But this Point I think has been, even by the most able Advocates on the *Protestant* side, carried too far. For, it is not necessary that all essential Truths should be so very plain and obvious to every Capacity, as that every one shall be able to see them without any *Assistance from others*. A Truth is sufficiently plain when it is capable of being made so by any Means that are in our Power to get; and if God's Providence has provided Helps for that Purpose, he may as well require us to make use of them, as he can oblige us to the use of our own Understandings; and we may be equally liable to Punishment for the Neglect of the one, as for the Neglect of the other.---Besides, it is not possible to settle a Measure of Knowledge that shall suit every one; for, different Degrees of *Christian* Knowledge are required of different Persons according to their different Abilities and Opportunities. Though God will not require any one to know more than he is able to attain the Knowledge of, yet he may require of him as much *Christian* Knowledge as lies within the Reach of his Capacity; and there is good Reason why God *should* require thus much. When God made a *Revelation* of his Nature and Will it was with an Intent that Men should *understand*

it, because it is no farther a *Revelation* than it is *understood*; and, as the Scriptures were intended for the Use of *all* Mankind, *all* Mankind are obliged to understand them as well as their Condition will permit them to do.

But, there is a farther Reason why it *must* be the Will of God that *ALL Christians* should study the *Scriptures* as much as they can, consistently with their Circumstances; and this Reason is taken from the *End* and *Design* of publishing them. They are intended for the *Good* of Mankind; and can that Intention be answered any other way than by enlightening our Minds with the Knowledge of such things as are therein contained? From whence it follows undeniably and obviously that the *more* our Minds are enlightened by them —, *i. e.* the more we know of them, the more effectually is the Intention of their Publication answered, because Mankind are thereby the more *edified* and *improved*.---As for Instance; take any *doctrinal* Point, any Article of our *Faith*, the more fully any one understands it and the more clearly he sees the Meaning of those Texts which prove the Truth of it, and the more comprehensive View he has of the practical Uses that may be drawn from it, the more firmly he will believe it, and his Belief of it will the better answer the Ends of his Faith.---Thus, as to *practical* Matters. Can you deny that every one will be the better enabled to discharge his Duty punctually and faithfully, the better he understands the Nature and Extent of the several *Precepts* in the *Bible* which contains them? And if you admit This to be true, which it is impossible for you to reject, is not the Consequence as clear as the Sun; *viz.* That every one is as much obliged to use all possible Means rightly and fully to understand those
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practical Parts of Scripture, as he is oblig'd to do his Duty?--So, likewise, it is with regard to the *Motives* which God in his holy Word offers to Mankind for the Inforcement of his Commands, the Rewards and Punishments annex'd to the Observance or Non-Observance of them, their Influence upon our Practice will be in Proportion to the Clearness and Fulness of our Conception of their Nature; and the better we understand those Passages of Scripture where they are reveal'd to us, the clearer and fuller Conception we shall have of them; and the oftner we read them, and meditate on them, the more strongly we shall imprint them on our Minds.

I hope, I have convinced you that *ALL Christians* are obliged to study the Scriptures *as much*, and to understand them *as well*, as their several Capacities and Opportunities will admit of. But it is impossible to determine exactly how much Time every one is oblig'd to spend in this divine Search, and what Degree of Knowledge of this Kind every one is obliged to acquire, because the several Capacities and Opportunities of Information cannot be so minutely settled. However, I shall give you some general Rules, that, by God's Grace concurring with an honest Attention, may be a Direction to your Conscience in this weighty Affair.

1. First of all, then, I think it the Duty of every one who professes to believe the *Scriptures* to be the *Word of God*, attentively to read some Portion of them every *Sunday*, at least, because *secular* Business being absolutely forbid on that Day, no Man can plead his Employment, or common Diversions, in Excuse for not attending upon God and the Business of Religion, at a Time which is by God himself devoted to those

Purposes. And if the Sunday be set apart for the Honour of God, and *religious Uses*, surely *some* Part of it ought to be employed in consulting his *holy Word*, which contains his *Will* to his Creatures, *i. e.* every thing that is necessary for us to know and practise in order to gain his Favour and secure to ourselves Eternal Life. This is Part of the Homage which is due to God, and a great Means of forwarding those religious Concerns for which the Sunday was separated from ordinary Uses; and therefore no Man who pretends to any Religion, and believes the *Divine Authority* of his Bible, can, consistently with such Belief, spend that *whole Day* without reading *some* Part of the *Bible*, the reading of which naturally makes up a Part of the Duty of the Day.

2. But, as the frequent reading the holy *Scriptures* is so necessary a Means of Improvement in *Christian Knowledge* and *Christian Perfection*, I would recommend it as a *general Rule* to *every* one who can find Time to do it, to read *some* Portion of them *every Day* of their Lives, if it were only *one single Chapter*; and I will venture to say, there are very few that could not find Time, when they are *at home*, more than enough for the reading so small a Part. Do but recollect your selves, and I am satisfied, most of you may remember many little Intervals of Leisure from necessary Business, either in the Morning, or at Noon, or in the Evening, which you might and would have employ'd in the Search after Divine Knowledge, if you had been as intent upon understanding your *Religion* and knowing your *Duty* to God, as you are to understand and improve your *Trade*, or to enjoy your *Diversions*. And, believe me, you cannot, without Experience, *conceive* what an Effect this regular Habit of conversing with
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the Word of God would have towards keeping up an *habitual* Sense of God in your Thoughts; for, how can we possibly *forget* him while we are so constantly hearing him speak to us? This great Advantage you would certainly reap from it, besides the many others which I have mentioned already.

Before I quit this Head I shall take Notice of a most shameful Practice which is in Use in many Places. *Shopkeepers* send out Goods in Pieces of an *old Bible*. What an infamously prophane Use is This of the most Sacred Thing in the World! What a daring Indignity to the Divine Author of it! Would any serious *Christian* wash his Hands in the Water consecrated for *Baptism*? How then can he think his *Bible*, the *Word of God*, the *Word of Eternal Life*, a proper Vehicle for *Coffee* and *Tobacco*? Whenever a *Bible* becomes too imperfect for its proper Use, it should be decently destroy'd; as the Water, used in *Baptism*, is directed to be thrown away that it may not be put to any *common* Use. Since I *preach'd* my Sermon I have been inform'd that some, who are guilty of this monstrous Piece of *Impiety*, have made a Jest of it. Of *These* I can only say, that they are as destitute of *common Sense* and *Modesty*, as they are of *Religion*. To *Them* I can say nothing that will avail any thing. But, I hope, their *Customers* will use a more successful Argument, by not dealing with them while they openly affront their *Maker*, and prophane his Sacred *Word*. I am credibly inform'd that the *Turks* pay so religious a Regard to the *Alcoran*, as believing it to be the Word of God, that if any one finds a Piece of it the *Government* will not suffer him so much as to *destroy* it, but obliges him

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him to paste it up in some Part of his House ; where by being read it may be of Use. But if any one were detected there in putting it to such *common* and *vulgar* Uses as are made of the *Bible* in these Kingdoms, we may be sure, he would be punish'd in the *severest* manner. But *here* the vilest *Abuse* and *Prophanation* of it not only goes unpunish'd, but *unobserv'd* ; not only without raising the *biggest* *Indignation*, but without giving the *least* *Offence*. But let us be *shamed* into an *external* (for there is no such Thing in reality as separating them) as well as an *internal* Esteem for God's Word, by the Practice of these *Turks* ; and let every one of us, in our private Capacities, discountenance every kind of Indignity offered to it, by all the Displeasure that we can *express*, or shew by our *Behaviour*.

3. Well but, there is something more than all This required of you, in order to the Knowledge and Practice of your Duty. You must not only be constant and frequent in reading the *Scriptures*, which most undoubtedly contain in them every thing relating to Religion that is necessary for you to know, but you must use all possible *Helps* towards a *better understanding* them, and a more thorough Knowledge of the Doctrines and Duties that are therein contained ; and, therefore, I shall now proceed to consider what *Helps* and *Assistances* the Providence of God has provided for you.

As there is an Order of Men set apart for these Purposes ; to instruct, to exhort, to admonish and to reprove you ; it is both your Duty and Interest to attend to their Instructions and Exhortations from the *Pulpit* ; to hearken to their Admonitions and Reproofs ; and *privately* to advise

vise with them in Cases of Doubt and Difficulty.

I say, first, it is the indispensable Duty of every *Christian* constantly to attend upon those Sermons which, by the Appointment of God, are delivered from the *Pulpit*; for no body, that thinks at all, can imagine that God has provided an Order of Men to read Lectures in Divinity and Morality to the *Walls* and *Seats*. If it be the Duty of the *Clergy* constantly to preach, it must be the Duty of the *People* to go as constantly to *bear* them; unless you will suppose that infinite Wisdom has done so weak and idle a Thing as to provide such publick Lectures to no manner of Purpose. And of what Use *can* they be if they be not *attended*? The *very Appointment*, therefore, of this Method of publick Instruction implies an *universal* Obligation upon *Christians* to give their Attendance, there being no Exception made in favour of any that may be conceited enough to fancy that they stand in no need of Instruction, or because they can read a Sermon at home. Neither was it consistent with the Design of such an Appointment to exempt any from the general Obligation, because That would naturally have made it useless, unless to those illiterate People who cannot *read*; and it is a great Chance but many of *Them*, too, thro' *Ignorance*, the Mother of *self-conceit*, would be as forward, as the most knowing, to despise Instruction. But, as I said, the Providence of God has thought fit to *appoint* publick Preaching; and, I presume, it will be allowed that he is a much better Judge what Method of Instruction is fittest for you. And As he is a better *Judge* of the fittest Means, so he has *Authority* to prescribe to you such Means as his unlimited Wisdom *thinks* fittest for

for you. As *we* are authorized by a Divine Commission to teach you in the best manner that we can, it is the Duty of all those who are committed to our Care to come and hear us. For, tho' I am very sensible that the People might often read a much more elaborate Discourse in *private*, yet That will not justify the Neglect of a *publick* and *positive Institution*; neither have you reason to expect so much *real Benefit*, in the way of true Christian Edification, (tho' you may receive more *Entertainment*) from the most admirable Discourse that ever was composed, if you read it at a Time when God has commanded your Attendance at *Church*, as you may reasonably hope for when you *hear* but an *ordinary* Sermon with an honest Mind, and in Obedience to his Directions. For, however we may be pleased, or affected with a fine Composition, it is an undeniable Doctrine of *Christianity* that the *Grace of God* is necessary to a *profitable* reading or hearing; and pray, now, who has the most Reason to expect God's Grace to give a Blessing to what he reads, or hears? The humble modest Man who is willing to be instructed in the manner which God has appointed, or the self-conceited and refractory who think themselves wiser than their Maker, and refuse to be governed by his Laws?

But, *besides* that we have Reason to believe that God by his Grace will give an *extraordinary* Blessing to those publick Instructions which you attend at *his Command*, and in *his House*, the *Place where his Honour dwelleth*; I say, *besides* this great Advantage arising in a *supernatural* way, if we consider them only in their *ordinary Operations* they may be made more profitable to the Hearers

Hearers than much better Discourses *read* in the *Closet*; and That for these plain Reasons.

I. When People read Discourses in their *Closet* they take care to read such as are most agreeable to their *Inclinations* and *Taste*, rather than what are best suited to their Spiritual Wants; such as *please* them most, rather than such as will do them *most Good*.—In the first Place, Men are generally ignorant of their Spiritual State and Condition thro' self-love, and for want of having attended to it; and are not proper Judges what Doctrines are most proper for their Case, what Sins they are most guilty of, what Errors are most predominant among them; and, consequently, in the Choice of those Subjects which they read upon in *private*, they may miss Those which are *fittest* for them.

II. Or, if they *were* better Judges than People generally are, of themselves they would not be likely to be fond of such Discourses as upbraid them with their Errors and Vices, put them out of Love with themselves, and set them upon the painful Task of parting with favourite Opinions, and darling Habits. *Prophecy unto us smooth Things, prophecy Deceits*. This is the sort of Preaching that is most acceptable in *our Days*, as it was in *former Times*; and when Men are to chuse their *own Doctrine*, the *Palate*, and not the *Constitution*, will be ofteneft consulted.

III. But, if we suppose Men *ever* so just to themselves in the Choice of their *Subjects*, it is next to impossible that Discourses, intended for *general Use*, should in *ALL* Respects be so well fitted to the Condition of a *particular Congregation* as Sermons from the *Pulpit* may be.

For, if the Preacher be a Person of Experience and Sagacity, he will find out the *Errors*, the *Faults*, the *Tempers* and *Dispositions* of his Congregation; and will study how to adapt his *Matter* and *Manner* to them; and by so doing he will often preach Sermons that will be more useful to *Them* than many others would be that are written with more Accuracy and Elegancy by a better Composer.

IV. Then, again, Sermons *delivered* have this particular and considerable Advantage over Sermons in *print*, that if the Preacher understands any thing of *Elocution*, he will make his *Hearers* more *attentive* than common *Readers* are, and point out to them the Stress and Force of the Argument by a proper *Emphasis*; and if he has any Energy in his Constitution, any sincere Concern in his *Heart* for the Honour of Religion and the Welfare of his People, he will speak, where the Case requires it, with an affectionate Warmth and Tenderness that will inforce what he says upon the *Passions* of his Audience.

V. The last Circumstance which I shall mention on this Head, is, the Effect which *personal* Knowledge and Regard will have in giving a particular Influence to Instructions from the *Pulpit*; and I shall esteem it as a singular Happiness to myself, if my sincere Affection for you and Intention to promote your eternal Welfare can give my Instructions any Advantage in *your* Opinion to make amends for their *own Defects*.

There is one Particular more under this Head which I shall mention, tho' in itself it be too trifling to deserve Notice. Some think themselves quite excuseable if they go to *Church* one part of the Day, observing, that *one Sermon in a Day is*
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as much as they can carry away. But let me ask them one Question.—Will they carry away a Syllable the less of one Sermon by the Means of hearing another? Not a jot, I dare say. And if so, then I must tell them, that they may hear several Things in the second Sermon that may be of Service to them.

But granting the Objection to have something in it. What can they say to the Neglect of *publick Prayer*? Surely they do not think that *twice* in a Day is too often for the publick worshipping of That God who is every Moment of our Lives our Support, to whom we owe every thing that we enjoy, and from whom alone we must receive every Thing that we hope for.

I thought it might be of Use to shew you the particular Usefulness of these *publick Instructions*, in order to remove an Objection that is often made against the Necessity of going to *Church*, and to induce you to attend them with the more Cheerfulness and Candour; but the *positive Institution*, with the Grace of God attending it, is, *alone*, a sufficient Answer to all Pretences whatsoever respecting the Capacities either of the *Hearer*, or the *Preacher*.

But the *Clergy* may be farther useful to the *People* by *private*, as well as *publick* Instruction, and it is the Duty of the *People* to apply to them for it. It is impossible for a *Sermon* to descend to the *particular* and *minute Circumstances* of every *particular Person*, though it may be adapted to the *Congregation in general*. Sincerely conscientious Persons will often be in *doubt* concerning Points of Duty; and where Men are so constantly at perfect Ease in their Mind about the Discharge of it, never distrustful of their own

Judgment, never advising with some discreet Friend in order to have their Opinion confirm'd, or confuted, this is a certain Sign of great *Ignorance*, or *Insensibility* and *Unconcernedness* about Religion. I shall instance, particularly, in one Case, because it is a common one. Men who frequent all the other Parts of *Christian* Worship, shall live for *Years together*, if not for their *whole Lives*, without ever partaking of the *Lord's Supper*, or ever advising with any body about it. Now, can there be a more flagrant Fact, than This, to shew how much *the Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light*? The former, if they be Persons of any Share of *Discretion*, are forward enough to consult *Physicians* and *Lawyers*, and will give *monstrous* Fees to retain one of singular Eminence in Cases that Affect their *Life* and *Property*, while the latter, in a Matter of much more Importance, never concern themselves to take any Advice at all, though they might have it without any Expence.

Perhaps they will reply, that they want no Advice because they sufficiently understand their Duty in this Case.

If it were so, it would be so much the worse, because *the Servant who knows his Master's Will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes*. —But, they are as ignorant of their own Hearts, as they are of the Nature of this Duty. Their Case, indeed, is bad enough, because they live habitually in a *criminal Ignorance*, as every one does who habitually neglects the Means of better Information; but *Charity* and *common Sense* oblige me to think that they do not live in the *Habit* of such a *presumptuous* Offence as that of
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knowingly and wilfully neglecting an *indispensable* Command of God.---No Man can be so ignorant of the *Christian Terms of Salvation* as not to know that such a one lives in a State of *Damnation*.---This is a dreadful Word, but it is a true one.---But the People of whom I am now speaking shew (by the Regard which they pay to other Parts of their Duty) that they are not in such a *hardened Condition*. And, therefore, whatever they think of themselves, I can *assure* them that they entertain some mistaken Notions concerning the Duty of receiving the Sacrament, the Qualifications for a due Reception of it, or the particular Obligations which they imagine that the receiving it will lay them under; and it highly concerns them to rectify their mistaken Opinions; for, an obstinate Perseverance in the Neglect of acquiring proper Information, after sufficient Warning given, will bring them into the desperate Condition of *presumptuous Sinners*.

There are various Cases, even in the *relative* Duties, where *private* Advice may be wanting in order to direct the Conscience aright; and the Reason why it is not oftener asked *must* be, the Want of a tender and quick Sense of Duty, which would naturally make Men more diffident and inquisitive. You know, by Experience, that an anxious Concern for your *worldly* Interest produces that Effect, and so it would in *Religion*, if you were equally solicitous about your *Eternal Salvation*.

The Providence of God has been graciously pleased to bless these Nations to which we belong with still further Means of Information, besides the Instructions which they may (if they be wise) receive *publickly* at Church, and *privately* at Home

from the *Clergy* ; and as every Man is indispensably required to use all possible Helps towards the Knowledge of God and his Duty, you are all obliged, *as far as your Capacities and Conditions in Life will permit*, to make use of Those which I am going to mention.

It cannot be made a Question, whether *written Discourses* may not be of some Use towards a better and more profitable reading the *Scriptures*, a more thorough Knowledge of the *Christian Doctrines*, and a more faithful Discharge of your Duty, *i. e.* for the better informing the Judgment, direction of the Conduct, and influencing the Will. Now, as you not only enjoy the Blessing of having the free Use of the *Scriptures*, which in *Popish Countries* the *Laitie* are deprived of, so there is no Nation in the *Christian World* that abounds with such Variety of excellent *Comments* and *Paraphrases* upon the *Scriptures*, admirable *Sermons*, and Discourses upon all Points of Doctrine and Duty, and lesser Treatises calculated for the lower Sort of People, at such an easy Price that most of you may be able to purchase them ; and, whoever has a sincere Desire after *Christian Knowledge* and a sincere Intention of improving in *Christian Perfection*, (as every good *Christian* must have) if he can afford it, he will most certainly furnish himself with some Books of that kind, such as are suited to his Capacity ; and will read them as often as he can find Leisure from the other Duties of Life. I only ask any one, whether, if these Books were written for the Direction of Mankind in the Prosecution of their *Trades* and getting *Money*, or any other *wordly* or *sensual* Good, you would not strive hard, abridge yourselves of many other Expences, rather

rather than not purchase some of them; and whether you would not be curious to inform yourselves which of them would best suit your Purposes; and if you did not, whether you would be allowed to have any tolerable Share of Wisdom in your Way. This, I say, is the Conduct of all *worldly wise* People, and but of very few, in Comparison, in their *religious* Affairs.

I believe, the *Clergy* are but rarely, I am sure, I scarce ever was, consulted on this Occasion. Yet, such Directions might often be of great Use, and would frequently be desired, if Men were as *religiously*, as they are *worldly wise*.

As to Those who are not able to purchase any Books, tho' of the lowest Price, I am sorry that it is not as much in my Power, as it is in my Inclination, to supply them at my own Expence. It is a very great Misfortune that, in large Towns, all over the Kingdom, the *Great Tylbe* being *alienated*, the *Vicar's* Income from his Living will not enable him to do those Things, for the Interest of Religion and the Salvation of his People, which are more wanted in those populous Places than in smaller Villages where the Minister's Revenue is larger. But the Compass of my Discourse will not allow me to enlarge upon this Subject. At present, I mention it by only way of Excuse for my self, and as a reasonable Pretence for applying to such of you as can afford something towards a Fund for *pious* and *charitable* Purposes. Tho' I cannot do all, I will do as much as any one, in proportion to my Ability. What I propose is, that we may *gradually* supply the poorer Families, where there is any one that can read, with *Bibles* and *Common Prayer Books*; with little Treatises upon the Ca-

tebism, the *Sacrament*, or any other Subject that the Place may be thought more particularly to require. I said, *gradually*. I would not discourage you by proposing to do too much at a time. The *Bible* is the *most necessary* thing, and ought to take Place of all others in our Regard, as much as it does in its Uses. And, if every one, who pays to the *Rates*, would give the smallest matter towards it, in proportion to his Station and Circumstances; or, if only those of the *middle*, and *upper* Rank would contribute; it could not be long before this Part of my Scheme might be accomplished. And, give me leave to tell you, that if you consider your immense Obligations to God, for all the Blessings that you either enjoy, or expect, here, or hereafter, you will gladly do any thing in your Power to promote his Honour. Or, if you have any compassionate Sense of the *Wants* of your *Fellow Christians*, you will think the Supply of their *Spiritual* Wants the greatest Instance of it that can be shewn them. And, tho' I am very unwilling to suppose that any Considerations respecting your *Temporal* Interest should weigh with you when the other more momentous ones prove light in the Balance, I cannot forbear making another plain Observation.---The proper Behaviour of these lower Sort of People in their mean Station is of great Consequence to the good Order, Peace and Comfort of the Society where they inhabit; and, therefore, by instilling Principles of *Religion* into them, and giving them a Sense of *Duty*, you are providing for your own *Quies* and *Security*.

That I may give you all manner of Encouragement to come into my Proposal, I must inform you of one Circumstance which makes it
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the more easy to be put in Execution. There is a Religious Society, for propagating Christian Knowledge, which sells, to their Members, such Books as are proper to be circulated in Parishes at half Price; and, as I have the Honour of being one of that Body, by that Means whatever you contribute to the Purposes above mentioned, will go twice as far as, otherwise, it would do---and this Advantage the Vicar of any other Market Town, by getting himself recommended to a Place in that Society, might obtain for the Good of his Parishioners---and, farther, I must observe, that round London, especially, they might apply to some of the neighbouring Gentlemen for their Assistance.---If such Methods as These were made use of, (and what should prevent it, but want of true Christian Zeal, and true Christian Charity?) there would soon be a vast Change made in the Morals of the Nation. *New to God the Father, &c. Amen.*

N.B. Since I determined to reprint the following Letters a Friend, for whose Judgment I have a great Regard, advis'd me to add Quotations, in order to strengthen the Accusations, and enliven the Composition; but my Reasons for not following his Advice are These :

1. Such a Method would extend itself to too great a Length.
2. The Strongest Articles of Accusation are no more fit to be repeated than written at first. It would be like repeating Oaths, or telling an Obscene Story after another Person. For which Reason I thought it better to do it in this Manner.
3. The Writings which I principally had in View are so commonly known that the Passages alluded to will naturally occur to most Readers.---Indeed, there are some particular Persons and Incidents in private Life that are pointed at, but the Characters are such as we frequently meet with, and few Readers need be at a Loss for a proper Application. So long as there be human Animals there will be a good deal of Pertness and Vanity in the World.

*An Account of the Trial of Sprightly Wit,
Esq; before the Right Honourable the Lord
Chief Justice PRUDENCE.*

Mr. HOOKER,

I Have here sent you the *Trial* which I some time since promised you. I am sorry that any unforeseen Delays should occasion a Disappointment, but if the Publication at last does not prove to be a greater Disappointment, I may hope to be pardoned a little Stretch of Promise. However, I should be wanting to myself if I did not tell you what I had to offer in Excuse for a seeming Neglect. The Subject of this *Trial* is of a nice Nature; and so many of his Majesty's Subjects may *think* themselves concerned in it; 'twas as necessary for me to go to Council as if I had been to publish *the History of my own Times*, for fear, it should be *my Turn* next to divert the Publick at the *Old-Baily*. I consulted Mr. Serjeant *Quirk* and Mr. *Quibble*, two Gentlemen very eminent in these *critical* Affairs, and they both assure me, I am safe as to the *Letter* of the Law, and that as to the *Spirit* of it, I need no more to fear it than *Modern Wits* are afraid of an *Apparition*. But to proceed to my Narration.

Between the Hours of Eleven and Twelve, the Court was sitting in dreadful Solemnity, when poor *Wit* appear'd at the Bar in a rusty black Suit that was a much surer Indication of his *Poverty* than of his *Repentance*. There was a strange Mixture in his Countenance which it is not so easy to describe as to conceive by recollecting the Disposition and

Temper of the Person. I shall only do him the Justice to observe, that he had a *decent* Assurance, and did not seem to think the worse of himself for being in Disgrace.

The Assembly on this Occasion was as numerous as the Character of the Gentleman was extraordinary; and according to the best Observation that could be made there were at this Trial as many *dull* Fellows, as there usually are *Women* at a *barndy* one; tho' on quite different Motives. The *Fair Sex* do not come thither out of any improper Curiosity, but in Honour of *Virtue*, and to shew their Detestation of all *Violence*, or *unlawful Love*: and, considering how much their *Moderesty* must often suffer in the Course of the Evidence, their *Generosity* and *Publick-Spiritedness* will appear in the stronger Light. But the other heavy Rogues go out of an evil Spirit of Envy and Revenge; and *Wit* is in the Condition of a *Thief* who when he is catch'd pays for all the Goods which have been stolen by others.

Silence being proclaim'd, the Names of the *Jury* were call'd over, and the Prisoner interrupted the Proceedings of the Court by *Cavils* and *Exceptions*. If a Man's Countenance happened to bespeak an uncommon *Gravity*, he was immediately for having him struck off the *Pannel*, as a *prejudiced* Person. He could not forbear some Insinuations that touched the Credit of the *Long Robe* and the *Coif*; which were remembered by the SERJEANT when he came to open the Indictment. Nay, he had scarce Discretion enough to spare even the *Bench*; but the *Judge*, then sitting in the Seat of *Justice*, was blind and deaf to every thing but the Merits of the Cause.

I was always convinced of the great Use of *Habits* in the Government of Mankind, but never before did I so sensibly feel its Influence as when I view'd Mr. Serjeant *Foulmouth* in his *State-Wig*. Nature has given this *Sage* of the Law a good deal of Face, a full Eye, large Features, and strong Lines; and dispensed to his Visage a liberal Portion of Sedateness and Composure; a great Profusion of Hair on each Side of it cast a Shade and Solemnity over the whole; all which together gave such Dignity and Importance to his Aspect, that I conceived the highest Opinion of his Knowledge and Judgment, and was more inclined to listen to him as an *Oracle*, than as an *Advocate* going to appeal to the *Judge* and the *Jury* for the Justness of his Pleadings. With all these external Advantages This venerable Person rose up and address'd himself in Form and Manner following.

My LORD, and you Gentlemen of the JURY. I am Council for the KING against the Prisoner at the Bar; in a Cause of the nearest Concernment to the Interest of Religion, the Safety of Government, the Preservation of Order, and the Happiness of Society; against a *Criminal* who has deserved the severest Chastisement that the Law can inflict upon him, and all the Infamy that the just Indignation and Contempt of Mankind can fix upon his Character and Person; that his very Name may become as detestable as he and his whole Family have ever been scandalous in their Conduct.---Here the Prisoner interrupted him, and spoke to this Effect.

My LORD, I humbly beg the Protection of the Court against *Personal*, or *Family* Reflections, I presume to hope, your *Lordship* will not think his Majesty's Courts of Justice a Sanctuary for
Rude-

Rudeness and *Ill-Manners*; and I am sorry to find that the *Serjeant*, while he is exercising his Profession as a *Lawyer*, should think it necessary to lay aside the Character of a *Gentleman*. My LORD, tho' I have the Misfortune to stand at this Bar as a Person under *Accusation*, yet I ought not to be treated as a *Criminal* 'till they have proved their Charge, and Sentence is passed upon me. If I be obliged to suffer the *Punishment* of the Law I have a Right to enjoy the *Benefit* of it too. As a *Man*, my LORD, I may expect it, by Virtue of the common Privileges of *Society*. As an *Englishman* I claim it by the Constitution of my *Country*.-- Upon This, the JUDGE, as it certainly became him, interposed. To the Prisoner he only said,

Sir, your present Circumstances require a modest and submissive Behaviour. *High Crimes* and *Misdemeanors* do not at all consist with an intemperate Heat. However, I allow your Complaints of Ill-Treatment to be just, and no more Occasion shall be given for them.---Then, turning to the *Serjeant*, he said,

BROTHER, you are Council for the KING; and I, tho' I have the Honour here to bear his Majesty's Commission, am Council for the Prisoner; so far, I mean, as to see that no Injustice be done him. I have, indeed, in the long Course of my Practice at the Bar known great Liberties taken by the *Pleaders* in the way of *Personal* and *Family* Reflections, but as I was always careful, myself, to avoid all such indecent and injurious Methods, so I have made it a determined Rule ever since I came upon the Bench, to hinder others from using them. They are as great a Scandal to the *Law*, as they are a Grievance upon the *Subject*; and I have often wondered, either that they have
been

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been so long tolerated by my *Brethren*; or so patiently born by *Gentlemen* of Fashion and Spirit. You must give me leave, *Brother*, to tell you, that in Causes of this Nature it is the Business of your Speech only to open the *plain* Matter of the Indictment, and *briefly* to set forth the Substance of what you have to produce in Evidence. All Attempts to *incense* the *Jury*, who are to judge of *Facts*, tend to *prejudice* their Minds and to *indispose* them for a fair and honest Judgment. And if by your Aggravations and declamatory Exaggerations you hope to influence *my* Judgment, I must take it as a direct Affront to my Understanding. If you make good your Charge by *positive Witnesses* question not but I shall lay the Evidence so fairly before the *Jury* that they will give a just Verdict; and, I hope, without the Assistance of your Skill in *Oratory*, I shall be able to judge of the *Heinousness* of the Offences, and give a proper Sentence. Therefore I must desire you not to go out of your Sphere to blacken the Prisoner, and inflame the Passions of those whose Business it is to *accuse* or *judge* him.---But, please, Sir, to proceed.

The *Serjeant* seemed to be discomposed and disconcerted at this unusual Reprimand, but he soon recovered his Presence of Mind and Composure of Countenance; and observed, that Complaints of the Behaviour of the *Bar* came with a very ill Grace from the Gentleman then appearing before it; a Person who hath done every thing in his Power to render the *Law* ridiculous, and the *Sages* of it contemptible; that it was a *Family Fault*, one of his Ancestors having put an *Ignoramus* upon our whole Profession, and this Wretch himself having ridicul'd the gravest of our *Reporters* by his Case of

Stradling

Stradling versus Stiles, to whom therefore he applied those Lines of the Poet

*Rode Caper Vitem, tamen hinc cum stabis ad Aras
In tua quod fundi Cornua possit erit.*

Brother, says the Judge, the Faults and Follies that have crept into a Profession may be ridicul'd without hurting it. It may, indeed, provoke the Professors, but when on that Account the offending Person comes in Judgment before them, they should take especial Care that their Provocations do not put them upon aggravating the Guilt of the Criminal, lest he should seem to fall a Sacrifice rather to the Resentments of the Lawyers than the Justice of the Law.

Upon this the Serjeant proceeded.

My LORD, if I had not been interrupted by that warm Gentleman, I dare not say Prisoner at the Bar, I was going to take the Method which your LORDSHIP has been pleased to prescribe to me. I care not how plain, or how short I am. I have no more Occasion for Artifice, than Inclination to be tedious. The Crimes of which he stands Accused, and of which he will soon be found Guilty, are in themselves so odious, they want no Oratorical Aggravations, or Exagerations to blacken them. It will appear, my LORD, “ that he “ has done great Dishonour to Religion; that he “ has helped to lessen Mens Esteem for the Sacred Writings; that he has been the Cause of “ actual Infidelity; that he has offended against “ Civil Government (which I fear, my LORD, is by many in this Age thought a much greater Crime than any Offence against GOD) “ that he “ has injured Persons in their Property and Reputation,

"tation, making free with all Sorts of Characters however unblemished, however exalted." These, my LORD, are the Crimes which will be *prov'd* upon him by express Passages out of his Writings, and by Persons of undoubted Credit, who have frequently conversed with him. My LORD, I have no need to say any thing more; and when we have produced our *Witnesses*, the *Jury* will have no Ocasion to deliberate whether they shall find him guilty of the *Facts*.

The *Serjeant* being seated, with strong Marks of Displeasure in his Countenance, Mr. *Manly*, the other Council, made a more civil, and humane Speech, to this Effect.

My LORD, and you Gentlemen of the JURY, I am, likewise Council for the KING against the Prisoner at the Bar. I shall not trouble your LORDSHIP and the Court with a needless Repetition of those Points which have been fully opened by the learned Gentleman who spoke before me. I shall only beg your Patience while I speak to some other Facts which have not yet been mentioned, but deserve Animadversion. But, my LORD, I shall do it without any Bitterness of Expression or Language that may justly offend your LORDSHIP, or provoke the unhappy Prisoner. I am so far from taking Pleasure in insulting him in his Distress, that I almost forget the vain and wicked Misapplication of his Parts when I see the sad Effects of it upon himself; and would with Pleasure become his *Advocate* to plead in *Mitigation* of his Crimes, if I could do it without betraying the Cause which I have undertaken, and the Community which he has injured. But since I am obliged in *Justice* to be his unwilling *Accuser*, I would shew him all the Tenderness which

which is consistent with the Duty of my Office,
 I must, my LORD, accuse him “ of having in
 “ a very unhandfome and vulgar Manner, in a
 “ Manner as unbecoming his own Character, as
 “ it is injurious to the *Fair Sex*, misrepresented
 “ the Nature of *Women*; represented them in
 “ such a forbidding Light, as *naturally* and un-
 “ avoidably tends to make them Objects of Ha-
 “ tred, rather than of *Desire*; of *Contempt*, ra-
 “ ther than of an *affectionate Esteem*; the Conse-
 “ quence of which must needs be, not only that
 “ the *Female World* will lose a great Share of that
 “ Regard which is due to them by the Direction
 “ of Providence, and in Right of their native
 “ Perfections; not only that the *Men* will in a great
 “ Measure be deprived of that *delicate Affection*
 “ which is so vastly superior to the grosser Passion
 “ of *Lust*, but *both Sexes* will have the less Incl-
 “ nation to enter into that most useful and ho-
 “ nourable Estate, *Matrimony*; and when ever Ne-
 “ cessity forces, or Expediency induces them to
 “ marry, they will do it with mutual *Indifferency*,
 “ if not *Aversion*; as the present Frequency of
 “ *Divorces* and *Separations* sufficiently shews. If
 “ THIS, my LORD, were *all* that we had to lay
 “ to his Charge, it is so great an Offence against
 “ the good Order of Society and the Happiness of
 “ Mankind, it deserves a severe Punishment. But,
 “ my LORD, I must farther accuse him of Ob-
 “ scenity and Nastiness; of having created Dis-
 “ turbances in Families; of having put modest
 “ Innocence out of Countenance, and given Per-
 “ sons much more Uneasiness than if he had in-
 “ jured them in their *Property* or *Person*; of
 “ having advanced loose Notions about *Engage-*
 “ *ments* and *Promises*, to the great Prejudice of
 “ mutual

“ mutual Commerce and Friendship; of ridicu-
 “ ling all decent Neatness of *Dress*, a thing great-
 “ ly serviceable to the Preservation of mutual Re-
 “ spect, as it is expressive of it; of shewing
 “ great Forwardness and Vanity in Company, to
 “ the great Scandal of all modest and well-be-
 “ hav’d Persons.” These, my LORD, are the
 Facts which we shall now prove to the Court.

When the Council came to produce their *Evi-
 dence*, the *Serjeant* ordered a Bundle of *Books* to be
 brought, out of which were read many offensive
 Passages; some, treating the most important
 Points of *Religion* and the most solemn Acts of
Prayer in an *irreverend* and *bold* Manner; others,
 where the most significant Expressions of *Scripture*
 were ludicrously applied to *low*, if not to *worse*,
 Subjects. Many more were not *fit* to be read be-
 fore the Court; such as direct *Oaths* and *Curses*;
 as was testified. Several credible Persons deposed
 that he had not for several Years been seen at any
 Place of *Publick Worship*,--and to shew that These
 things did *more* than *tend* to call in Question the
 Author’s *Faith*, and to deprectate the *Bible*, va-
 riety of Instances were given of their mischievous
Effects. Among others, it was prov’d that
 Squire *Shallow* concluded that *Wit* would not
 have been so *familiar* with the *Sacred Writings* and
 so great a *Stranger* to the *Church*, if he had sin-
 cerely believed the one, or had any Regard for the
 other; inferring likewise, that if *such a Genius*
 were an *Infidel*, Religion could not be true. His
 near Neighbour and Friend Mr. *Froth* came into
 the same Sentiments, and affected to imitate *Wit*
 in his irreligious Banter.

It appeared that he has made as free with the
 Characters of *Men*, as with the Word of his
 Maker,

Maker.---Here they cited several Lines of his, &c. the most abusive upon Persons of the highest Station, the first Peers of the Realm, the *Clergy in General*, in a Manner abusive beyond Example; several of the *Bishops by Name*, Bishops of the most amiable Character; the Royal Family; the Throne itself; in direct Opposition to the *Apostolical* Precept, which guards the *Persons of Dignities* from such gross Freedoms as cannot but level all Distinction and weaken the Force of Authority.

In the next Place they prov'd that he had injured many well-meaning People in their *Property* and that, tho' we live in a Nation of *Liberty* where the *Press* is open to *all*, and every Man has a Right to get an honest Livelihood in any Way that he can, he would not suffer any one to be an *Author* unless he had as much Sense and Ingenuity as himself, but would immediately stop the Sale, as well as damn the Reputation of their Works. These Facts were proved by several *Booksellers*, whose *Looks*, without an Oath, might have been credited for the Truth of their Testimony.

He had a particular *Cabinet* in his Study as full of Torn Characters as a Lion's Den is full of the Bones of Mangled Carcases.

The Curiosities repositied in this Treasury of Scandal and Malice he committed to the Care of a *Clergyman* of his Family, whom he took into Co-partnership with him in his Design of abusing Mankind: And, lest his Coadjutor's natural Fund of Malevolence and Vanity should not prove a sufficient Stimulus, he settled a *Pension* upon him for *Defecrating* himself, and Reading Lectures upon his scurrilous Libels.

As to the Crime of depretiating *Women*, there was scarce a Part of his Writings that was not brought as a Witness against him. But, for fear he should

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should not be able to render them sufficiently odious and contemptible, he created a new *Species* of them, a Set of such filthy Creatures as were enough to cool the most amorous Constitution.--- Nay, several *Old Batchelors* appeared in Court, and confess'd, that their *Celibacy* was chiefly the Effect of his Writings.

The next Article of Accusation, *Obscenity* and *Nastiness*, could not be proved by *Quotations*, the Places being too gross for publick Appearance; but two Gentlemen were sworn, who attested, that they were not consistent with any Notions of *Virtue* and *Modesty*, or with any Rules of *Civil Society*. Many Instances were produced of their bad Influence. Two innocent young Ladies acknowledged to their Confidant, *Susannah Trusty*, that they have been haunted by some wanton Images that appeared to them first upon reading *Wit's* Writings. The History of a certain—— in a certain Situation, threw divers Persons, not very squeamish in their Nature, into violent Vomitings, to the great Annoyance of their Imagination, and Detriment of their Constitution. As I was known to have dropped some things in Conversation, I was closely interrogated, and forced to declare, that the said *History* had like to have operated upon me in the same manner; and that his shocking Accounts of the *Sex* would have given me an *Aversion* to them, if I had not been acquainted with many of them, whose *Virtue* and attractive Charms had made Impressions too deep to be erased: I can't say but I gave my Evidence with some Reluctance, though it was to do *Justice*; for, though I am not related to the Gentleman, or any of his Family, yet I was known to

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have

have a great Inclination to favour him, which gave my Testimony the greater Weight.

As to the Peace of *Families* and *private* Happiness, Mr. *Friendly* deposed, that he had been employed to make up many Breaches occasioned by *Wit's* unseasonable Jest. 'Squire *Meanwell*, who married the eldest Daughter of Sir *Scornful Pride*, has been so often exposed before his Lady, for the Sake of gratifying *Wit's* Vanity, that from being at first ashamed of him, her mean Opinion grew up into a settled Aversion; *she* grew so insulting, and *he* so angry, that at last they parted, the Lady took ill Courses, and the whole Family is ruined.

Mr. *Steady* testified that *Wit* had made many *Promises* which he broke only because it was not convenient for his Interest, or agreeable to his Humour to keep them; and appointed Meetings which he never thought of afterwards, or never minded if he met with Company that he liked better, or altered his Mind; which was of so fluctuating a Disposition that there was no transacting any Business with him, there being no Dependence upon his Declarations, or Resolutions.

Next appeared Mr. *Henry Spruce*, complaining that the said *Wit* had put him and other *cleanly* Persons out of Countenance, only because they would wash their Hands and Face, wear clean Linnen, brush their Cloaths, lay their Things in some Order, and not be as affectedly dirty, slovenly and slatternly as himself.

The last Witness that was called, swore, that under a Pretence of neglecting *Ceremony*, he has often the Assurance to take Place of his Betters, as well as be saucy to them; come into a Room without

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without shewing the usual Respect, take the first Great Chair in his way, wear his rusty bangle-ear'd Hat even before *Ladies*, assume all the Talk to himself, and talk much of himself, of the exceeding clever things he has said, and how prodigiously they were admired; to the great Mortification of many Persons as much inclined to *talk* as himself, and very tenacious of their Right of *Precedency*.

Here the *Serjeant* said, they had many more Witnesses sworn, but the Facts charged upon him in the Indictment being sufficiently proved, they would not trouble the Court any farther.

Yours, &c.

Continuation of the Account of the Tryal of Sprightly Wit, Esq; before the RIGHT HONOURABLE the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE PRUDENCE.

THE Judge asked the Prisoner whether he had any Council to speak for him. He said, he had applied to several, who refused to take his Fees. One Gentleman, Mr. *Dullman*, who, thro' an Excess of *Modesty*, had not appeared at the Bar for many Years, generously offered his Service; thus doing Violence to his natural Temper, that he might not be thought to retain an ancient Grudge, which had been known to subsist for some Generations between the Families of the *Dullmans* and the *Wits*. But the Prisoner, as jealous of his own Generosity, refused the Assistance of Mr. *Dullman's* great Abilities; tho' probably, in a Matter of such Consequence, he would

hardly have been so ready to excuse him if he had not thought himself safe in the Skill and Oratory of *Serjeant Double*. The Serjeant had taken ten Guineas, retaining Fee, but when the Cause came on he never appeared in *Court*. The Judge was immediately fired with a just Indignation against so dishonest and dishonourable a Practice, that does Injuries never to be repaired; and directed the Prisoner, if the Serjeant should refuse to return the Fee, to sue him for it. Mr. *Wit* having no body to plead for him, spoke for himself, as follows.

My Lord, and you Gentlemen of the Jury.

I am under such unhappy Circumstances that I cannot, without Injury to my own Character and that of my Family, decline a Vindication of myself nor make any Defence without adding, if not to my *Guilt*, yet at least, to the Displeasure of my Judges; but if I *must* be condemned, I chuse to stand condemned by any other Court rather than that of my own Conscience, or to hear the severest Sentence from the Voice of Authority, rather than pass Sentence upon myself by my Silence.

And yet, *what* shall I say, or *how* shall I speak, without offending those whom it is my Desire, as well as Interest, to please; and furnishing Matter for a fresh Charge against me while I attempt to answer what is already exhibited? It is very natural, and for that Reason, I should think, excusable, for Persons under real, or imaginary, Grievances, to complain of their hard Fate; but I dare not complain of any Prejudices for fear of increasing them. Should I offer (and I know not what else to offer) such Arguments as seem to me to clear my *Innocence*, or extenuate my *Guilt*, I am in danger of being accused of *Vanity*; or should I

speak

speak in such a Manner, as becomes an *innocent* Person, it is great Chance but the *humane* and *modest* SERJEANT, will in his *polite* Language, put me in mind of my *Impudence*.

As far as I can perceive, the greatest Crimes, alledged in the Indictment, and aggravated by the Council, are no more than the Defect and Unhappiness of my *Constitution*; but it is a still greater Unhappiness to me, that if I plead my own natural Infirmities in answer to a Charge of wilful Crimes, I shall again be thought to insinuate Reflections on others. It has been hereditary in *our* Family, like the *Gout* in some others, to labour under the Inconveniency of having too high a Tide of Blood and Spirits, which like a rapid River are with very great Difficulty kept within Bounds; and yet, while I am urging This as a natural Account of, and a reasonable Apology for, a Gaity of Look, of Thought and Behaviour, (which is rigidly censured as *Pertness*, and *Levity*) I may be suspected of an Intention ironically to ridicule the prudent Circumspection of such as have a more happy Temperament of Body, the decent Gravity of the Bar, and the venerable Solemnity of the Bench. But I will hope for a more equitable Construction of my Vindication, and that my unavoidable Redundancy of Animal Life will answer for the necessary, tho', perhaps, offensive Fruits of it; Luxuriancy of Fancy, unseasonable Remarks and Repartées, Inadvertency of Conduct, Inattention to those Rules of *decorum*, which are more easily practised by Persons who enjoy the Felicity of a more composed and quiet Constitution.

As to one Part of the Indictment, I am not a little surprized that so great a Stress should be laid

upon an Affair of so trifling a Nature. I am not ashamed to plead guilty to it, or afraid that the Wisdom of this honourable Court should punish a Man for being a *Sloven* or a *Slattern*. The learned Gentlemen at the Bar are welcome to as much Severity as they can shew to my want of *Neatness* and *Ceremony*, provided they will not resolve them into *Vanity* and *Pride*; and it would not be very consistent in them, while they are aggravating a Charge of *Ill-nature* against me, to give an Instance of their own want of *Candour* and *Charity*. I never knew that the *Taylor* the *Milliner* and the *Dancing-master* were the prime Constituents of a *Gentleman*; that the Omission of a Bow, the misplacing a Bandbox or a foul Shirt, should be a Forfeiture of his Character; or that a Spot in his Coat should be such a Blot in his 'Scutcheon. My Lord, I should be ashamed to mention such Circumstances, if the Council had not thought fit to cite such Facts in Evidence against me.

But, my Lord, not only little Escapes and Irregularities, I was going to say, below the Regard of Men of any Genius or Spirit, but at least below the Notice of an awful Court of Judicature, are formed into Articles in an Indictment of high Crimes and Misdemeanours, but even those Parts of my Conduct and Character which are more than pardonable, more than barely innocent, are stigmatized as Imperfections, and objected to as highly blameable and deserving a severe Punishment. One of my Family, though settled in another Country, wrote a severe *Satyr* against *Folly* under the Form of a *Panegyrick* upon it, and perhaps the learned Council, while they are accusing me and my Family of ridicul-
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ing the Follies and exposing the Vices of Mankind, intended only to pay us a genteel *Compliment*. I am not so much concerned for my own Fate in the Event of this Trial, as for the Cause of Virtue and good Sense. If just Ridicule and Satire should be this Day publickly condemned, my Condemnation will be an Act of Grace, and a general Goal Delivery, to all the conceited Coxcombs, solemn Blockheads, and artful Knaves in the Kingdom. Affectation, Impertinence, and Dulness, though not cognizable in a Court of Justice, are very troublesome and offensive to the World; and whoever can restrain such Offenders as are out of the Reach of the Laws of the Land, deserves the Thanks of the Publick. There is a natural Aversion in human Nature towards Shame and Disgrace, and those who are too stupid to be convinced in a serious Way, or too obstinate to be reclaimed by the Force of Argument, cannot bear to have the Laugh or the general Odium of the World turned upon them. My Lord, it is with Pleasure that I can justly and truly say, (and it cannot be a Crime to be proud of such an Honour) that *those who are not afraid of God are afraid of me*. This would have been a vain Boast in me to mention, if Justice did not at this Time require it in my Defence. When I am publickly charged with publick Offences, it becomes necessary for me to plead publick Services.---And while I am thus unhappily *compelled* to remind an ungrateful World of the *Good* that the Family of the *Wits*, not only are capable of doing, but actually have done, by the Help of their so much envied Talents, I must take the Liberty to mention the great Improvement that our Language, and the great Enter-

tainment that polite and ingenious Readers, have received from our *Writings* and *Conversation*. It is no Presumption in me to think, nor at this Time is it any Indecency in me to say, that the refined and elegant Taste which has adorned any Age, or Country, has been owing to *us*; and the Return that some seem willing to make us for the Pleasure that we have given them, shews a strong Tendency in their Nature towards that *Barbarity* from which *we* have rescued them. A great many witnesses have been called to blacken the Memory of our Predecessors, and to stain the Characters of our present Generation, by producing every little Abuse of those natural Abilities, which, in the general have been so serviceable and agreeable to Mankind; and, therefore, I must, in my Turn, appeal to the almost universal Esteem that has been ever paid us, for a Testimony of our Merit. My Lord, I could enlarge upon This and many other Topicks, to the Advantage of my Character, and the Confusion of my malicious Enemies, but the Subject being *myself* I am unwilling to say any thing more than is absolutely necessary; and I have Occasion to say the less, by reason of the inflexible Justice, impartial and candid Judgment of my *Judge* and *Jury*.

The profoundest Silence ensued, and the Court sat some Time in Expectation of a Reply from the Council against the Prisoner; but the *Serjeant*, disgusted, it seems; at the Judge's not reproving the Prisoner for some Freedoms in his Speech, retired out of Court, and has declared a Resolution never to plead there any more while the present Gentleman shall preside in it. He has been observed for some Time to be very much out of Humour with the *Bench*, and most of his

Friends

Friends are of Opinion that nothing can ever reconcile him to it, but a Place upon it. He seems to have as great a liking to *Furs*, as ever a Court Chaplain had to *Lawn*, and has been as long in waiting for a *Commission*, as ever the other was for a *Mitre*-----The Judge, being informed that the Serjeant would not speak any more in the Cause, called for the other Council; who rose up immediately and made the following Reply.

My Lord, I should be under a Concern to find the whole Weight of the Cause thrown upon my Shoulders, if the Prisoner had not very much lightened the Burthen of it by his Defence; for, tho' he has been lavish of his Praises upon his own Abilities, and the great Use of them to the Publick, he has been very sparing in his Answers to the great Articles of Accusation. He has given up almost every thing of Consequence, and made an Apology for his Faults that will stand him in as little stead as the publick Services of which he makes his Boast. In the opening of his Speech, I confess, there was as much Art, as there was Decency; and I am sorry that his *Nature* should so soon get the better of his *Discretion*. When he began, he spoke, like a Person conscious of his being a Prisoner and an Offender, with Submission, and Humility; and I wish he had not, by the quick Alteration of his Language, convinced us that, notwithstanding those promising Symptoms of Repentance, there was no Alteration in the *Man*. With as gallant an Air as he has apologiz'd for *some* of his Faults, he has pleaded Guilty to *other* Articles of the Charge; which, tho' not so heinous as the former, are far from being so *trifling* as he would represent them. The *Happiness* of Mankind being the End of Laws, no Rule of Life,

no

no Disposition of Mind, which naturally tends to promote it, can be of an *indifferent* Nature; and the Neglect of all such Laws and Rules must proceed either from criminal Ignorance and Carelessness, or a more criminal *Pride* and *Vanity*. The Laws, agreed upon by Mankind for the Regulation of *Dress* and *Behaviour*, are design'd to express and cultivate mutual Respect and Benevolence; and This is not only their Original Intention, but their natural Effect; so that a wilful Violation, or negligent Disregard of them, is unfocial, affrontive, and displeasing, consequently of hurtful Influence. By omitting the usual Marks of Respect and Modes of Complaisance, we give less Pleasure, are less agreeable and useful, than we might be by a good-natur'd Observance of them. Whoever thinks himself exempted from the Obligation of *Good-manners* and *common Decencies*, of any kind, must resolve his Exemption into some imagined *Superiority* which not only frees him from the common Tye, but will secure to him the Esteem of Mankind without those Assurances which Persons of subordinate Talents and Perfections are forced to make use of.

He has artfully slid over many Instances of the Charge by resting on GENERALS. Nobody disputes the Capacity of this Gentleman, or his Family, the Excellency of their Talents, the Agreeableness of their Writings and Conversation, the good Uses that *might be*, and that *have been* made of them, when accompanied with *Modesty* and *Good-nature*; it is only the *ostentatious Shew* of their Parts, the Gratification of their *Spleen* and *Pride* in an unseasonable and improper Exercise of them, the great Abuse of them by employing

employing them upon Subjects that are not worthy of them; *These* and much greater than these are the Crimes of which he stands accused, which have been prov'd upon him, and of which he has not so much as attempted to clear himself. *Imperfections of Nature* ought never to be the Subject of *Ridicule*. It is a cruel Injustice to the Innocent, and an impious Reproach to their Maker: And I appeal to the Gentleman himself whether he and his Family have not taken *Pleasure* in giving *Pain*, and exposed others to Shame and Disgrace for the Sake of displaying Themselves — there are *Foibles* and *Follies* that are the proper Subject of *Humour*; and the best way of curing Mankind of them is to make People *asham'd* of them. But all such *Banter* should be sweetned with an innocent Chearfulness that will keep the Person in Countenance and Credit, while it shews his Weakness in that Particular. If it makes the *Man*, instead of the *Foible*, ridiculous, the Punishment is disproportioned to the Offence. If it excites any *angry Resentments* the Intention of it will be frustrated, and his Anger will be turn'd against the Person that injures him, and not against himself for his Faults — There are *Crimes* that merit the Lashes of *keen Satire*, but the keenest Satire should have no mixture of *Gall* in it. It should be pointed at the *Vice* more than at the *Man*. The Satirist, while he corrects, should shew his *Humanity*, and his Correction should be that of a *Christian* and a *Gentleman*. Dr. *Young* has given the best Example of proper Satire, in his *Universal Passion*, and the best Reason for these Restrictions, in as beautiful a Similie as ever was imagin'd.

*As the soft Plume gives Swiftness to the Dart.
Good-breeding sends the Satire to the Heart.*

Mr. *Addison*, that Ornament of Human Nature, and of his Country, is an Instance, in *Prose*, of the true Use and Exercise of *Humour*; and before him Mr. *Echard*, in his Answer to the wicked Principles of a very wicked Man; which makes it a little surprizing that one of the *Prisoner's* nearest Relations, now living, should assume to himself the Glory of having been *the first that ever taught Mankind the true use of Humour*. But I have observed that the same Motive which has sometimes induced these Gentlemen to *flatter*, has at other Times put them upon *robbing* each other. I deny not but that there are among them other Examples worthy of Commendation and Imitation; Examples of Persons who have employed their amiable Abilities to recommend and adorn Virtue, to expose and chastise Vice with Benevolence and Good-manners; and their Success has been suitable to their Motives and Conduct. But I must be of Sir *Richard Blackmore's* Opinion, that the *Wits* have not been, generally, so successful in reforming and serving, as in exposing, misleading, and entertaining the World. The *Prisoner*, when he was amplifying upon their publick Merit, did not omit the Mention of the great Improvements that our *Language* and *polite Literature* have received from them; but in order to state the Account right, he should have placed, in an opposite Column, the Improvements that they have made in *Profaneness* and *Immorality*. He prides himself in having been such a *Favourite* of the People;

ple; but *Popularity* is not a convincing Proof of *real Merit*. HARLEQUIN and MERRY ANDREW are Favourites with the *little* Vulgar, and an *Italian Eunuch*, with the *great* Vulgar. The silly Postures and sillier Jest's of the former have been as much admired, and the well tun'd Nonsense of the latter has been as well rewarded, as the most shining Performances of the most eminent of the *Wits*. AMUSEMENT being the great *Business* of Life, those who can contribute most to that Purpose will be the most caressed. As all Men have some *Imagination* in consequence of their *Senses*, though few have true *Judgment* in consequence of their *Reason*, it is no wonder that the *Prisoner's* sprightly Fancy should be entertaining; or that those who can give Pleasure to others should procure Favour to themselves. But those Faculties which belong to us as *rational* Creatures are more excellent than those which we have in common with *Beasts*, and those Men are the most valuable that are the most useful. It is the *Use*, and not the *Possession* of Parts that gives real Merit. The Faculty of *Imagination* is not only of a lower kind than that of *Reasoning*, but of a dangerous Nature. It is the Occasion of Error, and seduces into Vice. It is often the Source of Evil, seldom upon the whole, either a private or publick Benefit. It is owing to what the *Prisoner* calls a *high Tide of Blood* and a *quicker Flow of animal Spirits*. But, surely, if he pleads his *Constitution* as an Excuse for his *Faults*, what he complains of as a *Misfortune*, should not be gloried in as an *Excellency*. He must either cease to make a *Merit*, of it, or no longer plead it in Arrest of Judgment. The Truth is; it is in itself a *Perfection* of our Nature;

ture; and when accompanied with a *sound Judgment* and an *honest good Heart*, it is an Advantage to the Possessor, and becomes a most engaging Blessing to others. But we have an Authority for it, which the *Prisoner* will not dispute, that

*Wit, and Judgment ever are at Strife,
Tho' meant each others Aid, like Man and Wife;*
Essay on Criticism.

And Experience shews, that Humility, Modesty, and true Benevolence are as seldom its Attendants. My Lord, the *Prisoner* observed that he said the less because *he himself* was the Subject of his Speech; and I have a Reason that inclines me as strongly to Brevity, because I have the Misfortune to speak to the Disadvantage of *another*.

The *Judge* summed up the whole Matter with an Exactness, Conciseness, and Perspicuity, that shewed his patient Attention to every minute Circumstance, both in the Evidence and Pleadings, and his great Penetration in giving every thing its proper Weight. In the Course of a long Charge to the *Jury*, without losing Sight of the Cause, he digressed into short, but very genteel, delicate and useful Strictures upon the true Value and Use of *Ingenuity*. With a Strength of Reasoning that could not avoid convincing the Judgment and with a graceful and engaging manner that must conciliate the Affections of the most prejudiced, he set forth the Meanness, as well as the Guilt and mischievous Consequences, of misapplying so agreeable a Talent; recommended, in the most forceable manner, the Cultivation of that *Benevolence* which is natural to *uncorrupted Minds*, and which would

would check the strongest Animal Spirits, keep down the Risings of Vanity, and restrain the Overflowings of Self-conceit; since no Man would, for the sake of shewing a Superiority of Parts and gaining an idle Applause, injure the Credit, or disturb the Quiet of his Friends and Acquaintance, if he *really loved* them. But in a more particular manner, with a just Indignation, he inveighed against the Freedoms which this sort of Men usually take with *sacred* and *serious* Subjects, the Contempt of which must be the Destruction of all Order, and the Subversion of Society. I left the Court with pleasing Reflections upon the Behaviour of the *Judge*, and the Success with which such a Person, with such advantageous Opportunities, cloathed with the Robes, and surrounded with the awful Ensigns of Civil Authority, may dispense Justice, preserve Decency and good Manners, and recommend the discountenanced Cause of *Religion* and *Virtue*.

If any one should fancy that some *particular* Person among the Gentlemen of the Law, is hinted at, I can assure them that *Serjeant Foulmouth* is a Creature of *Invention* only, though I hope he may serve for some good Instruction to the *Profession*: And as for the *Judge*, I flatter myself that none of that Honourable *Bench* could think himself much injured if the Character had been intended for him; but it is happily so well filled at present, that there is no room for a *personal* Application. The Jury brought in their Verdict, *Guilty*. But the *Judge* took Time to consider of the *Sentence*.

In a short Time the Prisoner was again brought to the Bar, and after a good deal of solemn Advice, received the following Sentence, *viz. To be obliged*

obliged, under Pain of perpetual Imprisonment, never more to commend himself, or abuse any body else; and to get two discreet Persons to give two thousand Pounds Security for his good Behaviour.

Yours, &c.

THE

THE
NATURE
OF
PATRONAGE,
AND THE
DUTY of PATRONS, &c.

THE
NATURAL
OF
PATRONAGE,
AND THE
DUTY OF PATRONS, &c.

some part of which must be to the publick
 and the rest to the private interest of the
 patron. The intention of the patron is to
 the Church is a publick interest that every one
 must observe, that all the patron's intention
 may be to the publick interest. Even

NATURE

OF

PATRONAGE, &c.

LETTER I.

IN a former Paper you barely touched upon a
 Subject that deserves a particular Considera-
 tion. It is the primary Intention of your
Miscellany to promote the Interest of Religion
 and Learning; and if you would do it to any con-
 siderable Purpose, you must endeavour to persuade
 Those who have it in their Power, to distinguish Men
 by Rewards and Preferments who have distin-
 guished themselves by their Abilities and Services.
 From the Nature of Things it ever will be, it ever
 must be, that RELIGION and LEARNING will
 flourish in Proportion to the Encouragement which
 is given to *learned* and *good* Men; not only because
 proper Rewards are necessary Motives to excite
 Mankind to acquire *Merit*, but because proper
 Stations are requisite for the Exercise of their seve-
 ral *Capacities*. This is a Matter of great Impor-
 tance to the PUBLICK in respect to *civil* Promo-

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tions, but of much greater as to *Ecclesiastical* ones, and falls more properly within your Province. The scandalous Abuse of PATRONAGE in the CHURCH is a publick Grievance that every one must observe, that all serious Persons lament, that very few so much as attempt to redress. Even some, who in all other Respects are truly valuable and exemplary, are accessory to it; by which Means the Abuse gradually grows greater, and receives a Sanction from Custom and Authority. I shall therefore presume, in the decentest Manner that I can, to offer my Thoughts upon this Subject, and endeavour to shew, that PATRONAGE is a TRUST; that PATRONS are obliged to dispose of their Preferments with a regard to the great Ends for which they were intended, and not at Liberty to serve *private* Views, to promote the Interest of a *Party*, to gratify the Inclination, Humour or Interest of the *Patron*.

I did intend, by way of *Introduction*, to have given some Account of the *Original*, and *gradual Alteration* of Patronage*; but I have not Room, neither is it necessary; for, if PATRONAGE be, as it most undoubtedly is, a TRUST, whatever Changes it has suffered in the *Execution*, it must still continue the same in its *Nature*. Shift it out of one Hand into another ten thousand Times, a TRUST it must still remain, attended with an *indispensable* Obligation to satisfy the *equitable* Claim of the *Clergy*, to provide for the *Spiritual* Interest of the *People*, to consult the Honour of GOD.

First, Let us consider how the Case stands in Point of *Justice* or *Equity*, in respect of the *Demands* of Those who are to be *presented* by Pa-

* See two excellent Charges to the Clergy, by our late learned Metropolitan, when Bishop of Lincoln.

trons ; for, if there be an *equitable Claim* on the one Side, there must be an *Obligation* on the other to answer it. To talk of any Man's having a *Right* when he has no *express Law* upon which to ground his Right, will be reckoned strange Language ; and the Reason is, because few People extend their Notions of *Right* and *Wrong* beyond the Limits of *Westminster-hall* ; not considering, that all *human Laws* are supposed to be founded upon some *antecedent Law*, to which all Men are subject. *Human Laws* are supposed to enact nothing but what was *just* and *equitable* before it was enacted by the Authority of the Legislature ; and if it were not reasonable before, it cannot become reasonable afterwards, tho' the Nature of Society may require Subjection to Laws injurious to the *natural Rights* of private Persons. Instead therefore of a *Right*, to which common Usage has annex'd the Notion of some *positive Appointment*, we will insert *Reason* ; and then the Enquiry will be, whether it be not *fit* and *reasonable* that every Clergyman, who has devoted himself to the Service of the Community and disqualified himself for any other Employment, should be provided for in that Way, proportionably to his Ability and Industry in it. *Religion* being the common Concern of the Society, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a certain Number of Persons selected who are to employ their Time, first, in qualifying themselves for the Office of the *Priesthood*, and afterwards to devote themselves wholly to the Discharge of that Function. This being the Case, can it be made a Question whether Persons, so devoting themselves to the Service of the Community and so employing themselves in it, ought not, in *Reason*, to be supported and ad-

vanced in their *Function*; according to the Service which they actually have *done*, or have qualified themselves *for* doing? Whoever will deny This, is not capable of being *reasoned* with, because he denies the *fundamental Principles* of *Reason* and the *immutable Fitness* of *Things*. This is the very Case of the *Clergy*. It is requisite, from the *Nature* of *Religion*, that a certain Number of the Society should be educated for the Service of it in the Business of Religious Offices; that they should, when so qualified, give themselves up to the Administration of those Offices: Accordingly such a Number are so educated, so employed, and so devoted; and by such Dedication of themselves made incapable of any other Office in the Society, or of any other Way of Livelihood. Will any one now say that these Persons have not a *reasonable Claim* to a *Maintenance* suitable to the Profession to which, for the Good of the *Publick*, they have *appropriated* themselves, and to a *Reward* answerable to the Services which they have done to the *Society* in the Discharge of it? If not, then it will follow that the *Society* have a *Right* to the Labours of so many Members of it, without being obliged to make them any Return; i. e. that a Number of Men, without any proper *Consideration*, are to devote themselves to *Beggary*, or *Poverty*. If there be such a Thing as *Reason* and *Fitness*, the Demands of these Persons are *reasonable* and *equitable* in the *Nature* of *Things*. No Proposition in the *Mathematicks* can be clearer.

But, *Secondly*, they have a farther Claim upon the *Society*, in Virtue of the *positive Appointment* of the *Laws* of the *Land*. The *LEGISLATURE* has appropriated such a Share of the *publick Revenue* to the Uses of *Religion*, the *Maintenance* and *Reward*

ward of such as officiate in them. This is a *publick Invitation* to such a Number of Persons, to enter into *Holy Orders*; and such an *Invitation* implies a *Stipulation* or *Contract* between *Them* and the *Society*; in Right of which they are, by *Law*, intitled to such a Part of this Revenue, as they shall deserve by their Behaviour in their Office; or, in other Words, as they answer the *Ends* for which the Society may *reasonably be supposed* to have appointed the Revenue. What then may we reasonably suppose those *Ends* to be, for which the Society appointed such a Revenue? The *private Advantage* of the Person who has the *Nomination* to the Living, or the Benefit of the *People* for whose Happiness the Clergy are appointed, and the better promoting the Interest of *Religion* and the Glory of *God*? Surely not the *former*, but the *latter*. Those Clergymen therefore who have best answered, or are best qualified to answer those *publick Ends*, have a Title, by the *Intention* of the *Legislature*, to the largest Share of that Maintenance and Reward which was appointed for them. This Argument is unanswerable, unless we suppose, what cannot with any *Appearance* of Truth be supposed, that the Society intended the Advantage of the *Patron* in the *Endowment* of a Living, without any Regard to the Clergy, the *Publick*, or *God*.

Thirdly, This Obligation is bound upon *Patrons*, not only by the *unalterable Reason* and *Fisness* of Things, not only by the *Intention* of the *Legislature*, but by the *express Command* of *God* in his *written Word*. To this Purpose I shall cite a most remarkable Passage of *St. Paul*, where he is giving Directions about this particular Affair; and I defy all the *Subtilty* of the *Schoolmen* to elude,

or distinguish away the Force of it. He says directly, *That those who have laboured in the Word and Doctrine are worthy of double Honour or Reward.* This is a plain Rule that was not any ways peculiar to the Times of the *Apostles*, but will hold equally as long as *Christianity* shall endure; that Those who have taken most Pains, and have done most Good in propagating it, ought to be proportionably rewarded and distinguished in the Church. And by Parity of Reason the same Rule is to be observed with regard to Men's Capacities and Qualifications to do Service, as well as to Services already performed. According to this *Apostolical* Precept, such as are most likely to promote *Christianity* and the Salvation of *Christians*, ought, in their Advancement, to precede those of lower Abilities and Qualifications. To the same Purpose tend the several Directions given by *St. Paul* concerning the *Fitness* of Persons for *Holy Orders*; all which Directions must, in the very Nature of the Thing, equally affect those who are concern'd in nominating Clergymen to particular Cures, because the greater Furtherance of the *Gospel* and the better Edification of the People being the Thing aimed at by the *Apostle*, and depending upon the *Nomination* as well as *Ordination* of the most fit and qualified Persons, all *Lay-Patrons* are as much bound by those Rules as the *Bishops* are, unless you suppose such *Patrons* to be no *Christians*.

In these three Respects then *Patrons* are *Trustees*: They are Trustees for the *Clergy*, who dedicate themselves to the Office of the *Priesthood*: they are Trustees for the *People*, for whose Happiness they were dedicated, and the *Priesthood* appointed; they are Trustees for *Religion*, whose Interest and Honour

Honour ought to be promoted, as far as may be, by the Administrations of the Clergy.

Let us, by way of Illustration, change the *Faculty*, and substitute *Physick* in the room of *Divinity*. Suppose that *Physicians* had their several *Districts* appointed them, as *Clergymen* have their *Parishes*, with *settled Salaries* charg'd upon their Patients by Act of Parliament, with other honorary and profitable Places appropriated to the *Profession*. I presume, in this Case it will be granted, that the *Intention* of such Endowments was for the better and more honourable Maintenance of Physicians, in order that the Science might be known and practis'd with the greater Success and Advantage to the People. The Design of the *Maintenance* and *Reward* cannot be different from, much less inconsistent with, the Design of the *Faculty itself*; which is, the *Health* of Mankind. We will suppose then that the *Nomination* of Physicians to their Districts, and the Power of *conferring Rewards*, to be vested, as the Gift of *Living*s and *Dignities* are, in different Hands: Would any Man of *common Sense* and *Honour*, however he might come by this Right of Donation, think himself at *Liberty* to *nominate* and *reward* Persons without any regard to their *Qualifications*, their *Abilities*, and *SerVICES*; or to the Good of Those for whose Health *Physick* and *Physicians* are intended? Would he not rather think it his Duty to promote Men with regard to their Skill, and Diligence, and Honesty; and reward them according as they have contributed to the Honour and Usefulness of the Faculty, and the Good of Mankind? Or what would the World think of any Man who should prostitute a *Trust* of such Consequence, by appointing an unqualified Person

Person to practise Physick, or by giving him a Place of *Honour* and *Profit*, appointed for the Support and Encouragement of the *Science*, only because he was a *Relation*, or *Favourite*; or in Consideration of some *private Views*? Would not he be condemn'd for misapplying a *publick Revenue*? Would not he be thought answerable for the *Lives* of such as might die under unskillful Hands? I cannot imagine that the Matter could admit of any Dispute or Debate. Now, let any Man change Faculties again, and suppose these *Physicians* to be *Clergymen*, and I shall be strangely surpriz'd if the *Patron's Trust* will not be greater, and his Abuse of it more criminal, more pernicious, and more dishonourable, as *Divinity* is more excellent, and of greater Importance than Physick, and the *Health* and *eternal Happiness* of the *Soul* preferable to the *Health* of the *Body*.

It will signify nothing to object, what some will be very ready to object, that there is no *particular* Direction either in *Reason*, or in the *Law* of the *Land*, or in the *Law* of *God*, *what particular* Preferment, or *what particular Share* of Preferment any *one* Clergyman shall have: This was not possible, neither is it at all necessary. The Direction and the Obligation are, and must be, *general*; but the Application to *particular* Instances, is as easy as any *other general Rule*. An honest, conscientious Man will be able, in the main, to do his Duty; and no Man is able to weigh the Merits and Capacities of Clergymen by *Grains* and *Scruples*, let the Scales be ever so true, and the Hand of the Patron ever so steady. I shall exemplify This by a very common Instance. We will suppose a Person to leave a considerable Sum of
Money

Money to such a Number of poor People, and, tho' this Parallel will not run, as they say, upon all four, it will answer as far as I intend to apply it. It will not indeed touch like two Planes in every Part, but like two Globes in a single Point. We will suppose farther, that the *Donor* appointed certain *Trustees* for the Distribution of this Charity, according to the *Exigency* of the Objects. No one, I presume, will offer to say that this Money could be intended for the *Benefit* of the *Trustees*, for them to provide for their *Relations* or *Friends*, without any regard to their Circumstances, but for the Relief of those who wanted Charity, and to be distributed to the several Objects in proportion to their Wants: And, tho' the *Donor* did not specify the *Persons* who should partake of the Charity, or determine their *several Shares*, yet the *Trustees* were bound to consider the *Condition* of the Candidates, and, by the Help of common Sense and common Honesty, might tolerably well fulfil the Intention of the Giver. This Instance I bring, not to insinuate that the Revenues of the Clergy are *Charity* (for they are in the Nature of *Hire* or *Reward* for *Service* perform'd) but to shew that there may be a *general Obligation*, and that such a general Obligation may be discharg'd, without a *particular Direction*: And the Application is easy.

From this State of the Case (which I apprehend to be a true and a clear one) it follows,

That any *one particular* Clergyman, however qualified or deserving, ought not to *engross* such a Share of the Ecclesiastical Revenue as will interfere with the *Right*, i. e. *reasonable Expectation* of the *Body* of the Clergy, or be injurious to the Interest of *Religion* by lessening their *common Hopes* of

of Advancement ; which is a necessary Incitement to Merit, while human Nature continues to be such as constant Experience has found it to be. I would not be thought to be at all inclinable to the *levelling* Scheme, which is the other Extreme, and equally wrong. Distinctions of *Honour* and *Profit* there must be for distinguish'd Abilities and Services ; but what I mean is, that the Preferments of Clergymen should bear *some Proportion*, not only to their *personal Merit*, but to the *general Provision* which is made for the Clergy ; or else many Clergymen may be hardly and injuriously dealt by, and great Discouragement given to *Merit in general*, even where *no one* hath more than he deserves, if his Merit be considered *separately* from that of others. But if *one* Person enjoys five or six Preferments, which will make it impossible that many others, equally deserving, should have *two*, or perhaps *one*, it is not in this Case sufficient to say, he *deserves* it ; because his *Merit* cannot be *separated* in the Consideration of it, but must be consider'd *relatively* to the *Provision* which is made, and to the Merit of the *rest* of the Body, who have the same Claim to a suitable Reward. If the *general Revenue* be insufficient, there is a Defect in the *Establishment* ; but in the Distribution of it to the *several* Expectants, the *Good of the Whole*, and the *general Interest*, must be regarded. But how can this *common Good* be promoted, and this *general Interest* regarded, while one Person in the Church enjoys six times as much as hundreds who deserve as much ? Not that I think *Pluralities*, any more than an *Inequality*, unjustifiable. On the contrary, I am sensible that the *Credit* and *Interest* of the Body of the Clergy can't be supported,
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under the present State of the Church, without them; and I mention this Circumstance, rather in *Vindication*, than by way of *Accusation*. For, tho' the Clamours of the Disaffected never were louder than at present, and the Conduct of some have given too much Occasion for them, by an insatiable Thirst after an Accumulation of Promotions, yet, in *General*, there is less Cause of Offence given on this Account than in former Times, when the Clergy were in much more Esteem with the People.

LETTER II.

PUBLICK Authority having established a certain Share of the Revenue of the Nation for the Maintenance and Reward of a Set of Men who are appropriated to the Service of Religion, it follows, that the Clergy have as much Right to it as any other Member of the Society has to his Estate; and that each of them ought to have such a particular Share as shall be proportionable to their Merit, i. e. in Proportion as they answer the Ends for which the Legislature may reasonably be supposed to have appointed the Revenue. This, I say, is agreeable to the Intention of the Law of the Land, as well as the Law of Reason. And that the Ends proposed by the Legislature may be duly answered, publick Tests are required, from the Candidates for any Benefice, of their being qualified to answer those

those Ends: If any Candidate gives *legal* Proof of his having the *Qualifications* required by *Law*, the *Patron* has an Action against the *Bishop* if he refuses him Institution; but if the *Bishop* can make his *legal Disqualification* appear to the Courts of *Law*, the *Law* indemnifies, as much as *Conscience* obliges him to reject such a one: From whence I infer these two Things as evident Deductions.

First, That no Man, in the Opinion of the *Legislature*, ought to be excluded from his *proper* Share of the Revenue, so appropriated, who has the *Qualifications* required by *Law*.

Secondly, That every Man ought to be excluded from having any Part of it, who has not those *Qualifications*.

The *Legislature* has an indisputable Authority to determine the *Qualifications* of the Persons who are to enjoy that Revenue which it has a *Right* to appropriate. Those *Qualifications* are expressly declared, and no *private* Person has a Power to alter what *publick Authority* has a Power to establish; and this Establishment has all the binding Force that any Establishment can have, because the *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical* Authority have concurred in making it: But, besides the Obligation arising from *Authority*, it is fit, in itself, that *publick Wisdom* should determine Matters of a *publick* Nature; and the united Wisdom of the Nation is most likely to determine wisely.

What leads People into a mistaken Notion of their Power is This; *Patrons*, because *Patronage* is annex'd to their *Estate*, look upon it as an *absolute Possession* which they can dispose of in an *arbitrary* Manner; whereas it is only a *limited Privi-*

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lege and Trust. The *Privilege* consists in having the Liberty of nominating a *qualified* Person to such a Benefice as he has *merited* by his Behaviour; and the *Trust* obliges him to do *Justice to Merit.* And This is a Privilege both honourable and advantageous; *honourable*, as it is a *great and important Trust*, that gives a Man an Opportunity of doing Honour to Religion, Service to the Publick, a Kindness to Men of Worth; *advantageous*, as it allows him the Liberty of giving the *Preferrence* to his *Friend*, his *Relation*, or a Person recommended to his Favour by any other *private* Consideration, *provided* he, *in himself*, be equally worthy of the Preferment. But every Clergyman, by the *Intention* of the *Legislature*, being intitled to a Share of the Revenue, answerable to his *Labour* and *Capacity*, PATRONS are the *Stewards* appointed, by the *same* Authority, to give them their *Portion in due Season*; and they have no Commission to require any other *Qualifications* than what the *Law* has required. If they had a *discretionary* Power (and if they have a Power of adding any *Qualifications* at all, they have an *unlimited* one) to require such *additional* *Qualifications* as they shall think proper, it is in the Power of a Number of Patrons to agree among themselves, in order to serve their own Purposes, to defeat the very *Design* of *Church Preferments*, to starve one half of the Clergy, and turn what were intended, and ought to be employed, for the Honour of God, and the eternal Welfare of Mankind, into Engines of State, and Instruments of Ambition or Avarice. The Reader will easily guess that I have in my Thoughts, chiefly, the now almost universal Practice of making *political Opinions* and *Measures* a

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Qualification for any Preferment in the *Church*; and That so *necessary* a one, that without it, tho' Gentlemen have defended Religion by their Writings, and adorned it by their Examples; tho' they have been an Ornament to their Profession, and a Blessing to the Community; yet they shall not be deemed worthy the smallest Reward, or the least Notice, for no other Crime but an Adherence to their Principles; while others, without any regard to their *Services*, or *Capacity*, shall be thought fit for the most arduous Stations, and worthy of the largest Benefice, or the highest Honours, for no other Consideration besides a firm Attachment to a PARTY: A Practice so openly avowed, that one would be apt to think it not only justifiable, but *meritorious*; and yet so *exceedingly* pernicious and criminal, that it may justly seem strange that any *good* Man could ever come into it.

When Men are determined not to alter their Conduct, it is natural for them to defend by *Argument* what they practise upon *Interest* or *Inclination*; and Ingenuity can give Colourings to almost any thing that stands in Need of them. This flagrant Abuse of a *publick Trust* has its Plea, and I shall endeavour to do it Justice. "It is pretended, by each Party, that the opposite one takes such Measures as will endanger the *Constitution*, and therefore that they act more agreeably to the *Trust* reposed in them by the *Legislature* by preferring Men who will oppose such dangerous Designs, than they could do by promoting Persons of the greatest Merit who would probably join with them." This

is

“ is the Whole of the Argument ; to which I
“ answer,

First, Patronage, as I have proved, is a *complicated Trust*. PATRONS are *Trustees*, not only for the *Clergy* and the *Constitution*, but for the *People* who are committed to the Care of the *Clergy*. The *People* have a Right to demand of the *Patron* a *proper Pastor*; one that is *able* and *willing* to discharge the Duties of his Function among them; and, in the *ordinary Course of Things*, their *eternal Happiness* depends upon his *Capacity and Conduct*. And are the *People* to be *damned*? Or is their *Salvation* to be *bazarded*? Or their spiritual Welfare to be *greatly injured* by the Nomination of a Pastor who is *insufficient*, either in respect to his *Ability* or *Morals*, to execute the ministerial Office effectually? And This only for Fear, if an able and faithful one were appointed, he *might* vote for a Member of Parliament, who *might* vote for a Ministry, who *might* take Measures destructive of Religion. This is doing a certain Evil to prevent an uncertain one. However, as it is *Malum in se*, absolutely *Evil in itself*, no Consequences can justify it. A Man might as well plead a Privilege to commit *Fornication*, *Theft*, or any other Crime, under a Pretence that it might be the Means of preventing *greater Crimes*. For to hazard so many *People's eternal Happiness*, and to dishonour God and Religion, are Crimes as *unalterable* as any other Acts of *Immorality*.

Secondly, It deserves to be consider'd how *inexpedient* it is, that Persons, in the Execution of a *publick Trust*, should depart from the *stated Rules* established by *Authority*, as it gives them an Opportunity so often to substitute their particular *Passions Views Opinions and Humours* instead

of the Reasons which ought to influence ; by which Means the Expectations of Clergymen are so very precarious that Gentlemen of Circumstances, Capacity, and Integrity, who can promise themselves Success in any other Profession, will not enter into Holy Orders ; and the Church will necessarily be filled with Persons of mean Extraction, narrow Fortunes, and abject Minds, who will be the most likely to sacrifice their Character to their Interest ; so that whatever Inconveniences might attend an Adherence to the *established* Qualifications in *particular Instances*, or whatever Good might *occasionally* arise from a Liberty of adding to them, the Question is, which Method would be best upon the *whole*, and in the *long Run*.

Thirdly, Therefore, I observe, that the Danger of preferring Men of *Merit* without any Regard to *Party* would not be so great as is pretended. For, whence is it that so many Men of *Character* go the *Lengths* of a *Party*, but from the Force of *Interest*, which blinds the *Judgment*, and over-rules the *Will* ? Take away the indirect Motive, and, in *general*, they would judge impartially, and act conscientiously. I know very well the Force of Custom, the Power of Obstinacy, the Influence of a false Shame ; that these and other such like Motives will prevail upon many, who have been long or are deeply engaged with a Set of Men, to continue their Attachment ; but Numbers, when left to the Direction of their unbiassed Sentiments and Affections, would have Discernment enough to discover the Designs of their Leaders and the Tendency of their Measures ; and would have the Resolution and Integrity to leave them whenever they leave the Interest of our *Constitution* in *Church* and *State*. And as to the growing and
future

future Generations, They would come into the World without any such *Prejudices* and *Prepossessions*, so that in a few Years Men of Learning Piety and Parts would *uniformly* consult the Honour of *Religion* and the true Interest of the *Publick*, when such a Conduct ceased to be any Bar to their Promotion. The most effectual Method to secure our *Established Church* would be, to encourage such as are best acquainted with the *Scriptures* and the Constitution of the *ancient Church*. It is almost impossible to suppose that these Men should be disaffected to the Church of *England* in which they have always been educated, and which, upon Enquiry, they find to be so agreeable to the primitive Model and Practice. And if the same Care be us'd to distinguish *pious* and *disinterested* Clergymen, there will be the less Temptation, or Temptation from Temporal Advantages will have the less Influence to seduce them to act contrary to their Judgment and habitual Inclination in favour of a *Party*. So again, for the *Established Government*; an *honest, upright, conscientious, sensible* and *learned* Clergy are the least likely to *falsify* or *break* their solemn Engagements, and to overturn or endanger the Constitution in the *State*, which is so necessary to the Support of the Constitution in the *Church*. Whereas, *weak* and *ignorant* Men may easily be impos'd upon by Sophistry, and misled by hypocritical Pretences, to join with any Sett of Men in any Measures, however destructive and unchristian. Or if Clergymen be *greedy, worldly-minded, and ambitious*, whatever superior Share it *Learning* *Parts* and *Knowledge* they may have, it is too notorious from *History* that they will sacrifice every thing to the Security of their secular Interest and the Accomplishment of their Schemes;

so that they will be true to no Party, and to no Measures, but what will serve their own Purposes; true to any Party and to any Measures that will advance them. But,

Fourthly, Whatever Inconveniencies, whatever dangerous Consequences might happen, no Inconveniencies, no Danger can be greater to Religion, Learning, the Constitution, and the publick Welfare, than the Effects of confining all *Ecclesiastical* Promotions within the narrow Channel of a *Party*. When *political* Merit is found to supply all Defects both *Intellectual* and *Moral*, to give all Accomplishments and Graces, the Bulk of young People will soon confine their Studies and Endeavours to the most easy, the shortest and most effectual Method of Advancement. It is more painful to acquire useful Knowledge and make a Figure in Literature, to get the Dominion over our Passions, and contract Habits and exalted Degrees of Virtue and Religion, than to give a right Vote, to be loud at an Election, to express an intemperate and uncharitable Heat; and when the less difficult Qualifications for Favour become the most acceptable and forceable Recommendations to it, Mankind in *general* will not be at the Trouble of attaining to Accomplishments, which, *at the best*, will be of no Use to them in their Pursuits. There can be nothing clearer in *Speculation*, or more certain from *Experience*, than that a *Disregard* to *real Merit* will in time *destroy* it. And in Proportion as the *Clergy* degenerate, the *People* will degenerate too. Whatever has a natural Tendency to corrupt the former, will draw the Corruption of the latter after it. To propose the *Security* of Religion, by *discountenancing* it in Those who by their Instructions and Example are
to

to propagate it ; or to consult the *Safety* of the *Government* by Schemes that will destroy *Religion*, is absurd and wild. I wish the Absurdity were not so apparent as it is from the State of the Nation ! We have been long groaning under a *Chronic* Distemper which grows every Day worse, and we are afraid of applying the proper *Alteratives* for its Cure, lest the Remedy should turn into an *Acute* one. We are in a *lingering* ; or rather in a *galloping Consumption*, which, if neglected, *must* be our Destruction ; but we dare not attempt to give Strength and Nourishment, for fear of bringing on a *Fever*. If Men act upon this View, that our *Constitution* may outlive several of those who are helping every Day to effect its Ruin, it is a probable Scheme, but their *Posterity* will not be beholden to them for it. I promised to treat this Subject as *inoffensively* as I could, and so I have ; but if I propose to offend none of my Readers, I must be *silent* : If the Subject were less *offensive*, it would not be *seasonable*. But, as there is so much Occasion to speak these unwelcome Truths, I shall speak them freely, though without any other Warmth than what arises from a disinterested Zeal, and without any other Motive than the Hopes of doing some little Good.

LETTER III.

I N my last I observed, that *publick Authority* had determined the *Qualifications* of Those who are to enjoy Ecclesiastical Benefices, and that therefore *Patrons*, who are only *Trustees* for the due Disposition of them, have not a *discretionary* Power to make *additional* Qualifications, in order to exclude such as are *legally* qualified : I observe next,

That such as have not the Qualifications required by *Law*, are by *Law* excluded, and ought not to enjoy *any* Ecclesiastical Promotion. And this Deduction, tho' not truer, yet is more obvious from what I laid down before, than the former one. For, there may be Room to imagine, that the *additional* Qualifications come within the *Intention* of the *Legislature*, tho' they be not *specified* in the *Law*; but, if the *Law* expressly requires any thing as a Qualification, there can be no Room to doubt whether the *Legislature* INTENDED that any Person who has *not* that Qualification should be *excluded*. The *Law* expressly requires, as a Qualification for a Benefice, that a Man should believe the *Doctrines*, and be well affected to the *Worship* and *Government* of the Church *established* in this Nation. Now, can it be made a Question, whether it were the *Intention* of the *Legislature*, that such as *disbelieve* any of the *Doctrines*, (the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* for Instance,) or are *disaffected* to the *established Worship* and *Government*, should

should be excluded from having any Benefice ; And if the *Legislature*, the *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical* Authority, have a Power (which cannot be denied) of making Laws that are binding upon the Subjects of that Authority, it cannot be *lawful* for Patrons to give a Benefice to one excluded by the *Law*, or for such a one to *accept* it. Both the *Donation* and the *Acceptance* are criminal, because an actual *Disobedience* to a *Lawful Authority* in Matters which they have a Right to determine ; and an Invasion of *Property*, by possessing what is by Law given to another. The Crime of giving a *false Test*, declaring their *Assent* and *Consent* to Things which they do not *believe* and *approve*, I shall not here consider. The Learned Dr. *Waterland* has stated that Point to Satisfaction in two Pamphlets upon *Subscription* : But I consider the Case as a *Violation* of a *plain Law*, and an *Injury* to somebody in his *Property*. The most parallel Case that I can bring is, that of a *Fellowship* in a College. The Statutes of a College, we will suppose, exclude all *married Men*, and yet a Fellow may *clandestinely* marry ; and after he has by *Matrimony* forfeited his Fellowship, he may continue to enjoy it. But, tho' Men by Interest have been tempted to be guilty of this Practice, I never met with any Body wicked or weak enough to defend it ; because it is manifestly a *Breach* of the *Statutes* which are binding upon every Member of the Society, and an *Injury* to some other *qualified* Person who is kept out of the Fellowship. But if such a Fellow, upon Suspicion, were called upon to declare whether he were married or not, and he should deny it, This would add *Insincerity* and *Falseness* to *Disobedience* and *Injustice*. How is the Case a whit better in respect to *disqualified* Persons accepting,

or continuing to enjoy, an *Ecclesiastical Benefice*? Are not the Laws of the Land as binding upon the Conscience of every Subject, as the Statutes of a College upon all its Members? Is it less injurious to *acquire*, or *keep*, 2 or 300 *l.* a Year, perhaps a great deal more, than a less Income? The larger the Revenue, and the longer the Possession, the greater the Crime. Or is it not *immoral* to *dissemble* and *deceive* in the one Case as well as in the other? And is not every Patron who *nominates* any Clerk to a Promotion, whom he knows to be *disaffected* to the *established Doctrines, Worship* or *Government* of the Church, *accessory* to the *Disobedience, the Insincerity, the Dissimulation* and *Injustice* of which the Clerk is guilty by his Acceptance and Possession?

Secondly, But I am afraid the Case is still worse than I have as yet represented it. *Patrons* not only assume to themselves a Power of *disqualifying* Persons who are legally qualified for Preferment, but make their very *Qualifications* a *Disqualification*. Their *Title* is their *Bar*. Their *Merit* is their *Crime*. Their *Glory* becomes their *Disgrace*. They have a zealous Affection for the *established Doctrines*, and *therefore* they are unfit for Preferment in the *Established Church*. On the other hand, Men's *Disqualifications* are sometimes their *Recommendation*. Their *Disaffection* is their *Merit*. They seek and obtain Promotions in a *Christian Church*, by depreciating *Christian Doctrines* and *Christian Institutions*. They rise in an *Established Church* by shewing an Inclination to *alter* it. The Order of things is inverted. The *Constitution* becomes a *Party*, and a *Party* the *Constitution*. Every one, no doubt, has a Right of *private Judgment*. If upon Examination he cannot see Reason

to believe the *established Doctrines*, he has the Liberty to *dissent* from us ; if he does not approve the *established Worship*, he may *separate* from us : Nay, what should hinder him from endeavouring, by all lawful Means, to procure an *Alteration* in the *Establishment* ? But surely it is against all Order and good Government, against all the Rules of Honesty and Honour, to *exclude* Persons from publick Favour and Honour, or to promote others in direct *Opposition* to our *Constitution*, to the *standing Laws* of our *Country* ! If this Practice can be reconciled to the Scheme of *Moral Virtue*, which many are attempting to exalt above *Revelation*, I shall think as meanly of *their Morality* as They seem to do of *Christianity*.

Thus far then we have proceeded in the Argument upon Principles that have their Foundation in the very Nature of *Government Society* and *Religion* ; from whence it appears, that the *Legislature* having *established* a Revenue for the better Maintenance and Encouragement of Those who are dedicated to the *Ministry*, PATRONS are obliged to give it to such Persons, and in such Measure and Proportion, as shall best answer the *Ends* proposed by the *Establishment* of it ; and, those *Ends* being the *Salvation* of *Mankind* and the *Honour* of *God*, that Those are intitled to the largest Share who, in the Opinion of the *Legislature* (as far as we can judge of their Opinion) are best *qualified* to answer those *Ends*, or have best answered them.

Thirdly, But from hence I go on to observe farther, that *Patrons* are obliged not only to reward *Merit*, and to give *Precedency* to Men of the greatest *Merit*, but to consider the *particular Qualifications* of the Persons promoted, and, as far as may be, to adapt the *Men* to the *Preferments* as will

will do most Service to *Religion* and to *Mankind*; This being THE GREAT END of all Ecclesiastical Preferments. Archbishop *Laud*, That great Patron of *Merit*, took Care to inform himself of the Characters of Clergymen in every Part of the Kingdom; what every one was best *fitted* for; whether for his Prudence and social Virtues to be intrusted with a difficult *Parochial Care*, where *Conduet* as well as *Piety*, and *Knowledge* of *Mankind* as well as *Books*, is requisite to the success of his Ministry; whether by his Learning or great Parts to do Service to *Christianity* in the Capacity of a *Writer*, or a Preacher to a learned or captious Audience; whether by his Wisdom Courage and Integrity peculiarly qualified for the *Government* of the Church; and, as far as he had Opportunities of doing it, he promoted them suitably to their several Talents, and rewarded them suitably to their several Deserts. This surely was a true *Christian Rule*: For if Patrons be obliged to consult the Interest of *Christianity* and the *Salvation* of *Christians* (which I defy the whole World to disprove) the *ordinary* Means of doing This must be by placing such Persons in the several *Parishes* as will rightly divide the Word of God, preach sound Doctrine in the most profitable Manner, be the most acceptable, decent, and exemplary in their Behaviour. If the *Faith* must be defended, how can That be done but by learned and ingenious Men? And if Learning be necessary, what is the Way to promote Learning but by encouraging it, by finding out Men of Parts and Industry who are willing to study and capable of writing, and by giving such Men proper Countenance and Assistance? If we expect to see the Church wisely and

and faithfully governed, wise and faithful Governors must be set over it.

The Case of *Market Towns* deserves a particular Regard from Patrons. *They* are Cures of great Importance, of difficult Execution, and meanly supported. They are *most* of them populous Parishes. The *People* are most of them Persons of low Extraction and narrow Education, who measure a Clergyman's Merit solely by his outward Circumstances. A *great Part* of them are necessitous, and Objects of Charity; and, yet, the *Vicar* (for there is scarce a *Market Town* that is not a Vicaridge) has seldom enough to keep *Himself* above Contempt, much less to enable Him to be generous in Acts of Hospitality, and liberal in Acts of Compassion. And, what makes his Case still worse, the Income of a *Clergyman* is generally magnified by Report; and he will be as much reproach'd by Those who are ignorant of his Circumstances for his *imagin'd Avarice*, as he is usually despis'd by Those who know his Inability, to live in a handsomer Manner.

Well, but is every Patron, upon any Vacancy, obliged to travel round the Nation, or employ Emissaries in all Parts, to find out the worthiest and fittest Man? Or must not he provide for a *Relation* or *Friend*, while a worthier or fitter Man is unprovided for? This would make Patronage a *Snare*, or, like the *Jewish* Ceremonies, an intolerable Yoke.

It is an easy matter to start Difficulties, and as easy for a Conscientious Man to do his Duty. A *Private Gentleman* can't be supposed to be acquainted with every Man's Character, and if he makes choice of the worthiest and fittest Person that he knows, This, I presume, may suffice for

a *General, Ordinary Rule.* But in *extraordinary* Cases, where the Benefice is of a very great Value, or the Duty of a very difficult Nature, *particular* Care and Caution ought to be us'd. Thus, again, as to *Friends* and *Relations*, Affinity and Friendship are allowed to be natural Considerations; and if the Preferment be tolerably suited to the Capacity and Merit of the Person, *detur digno*, I apprehend to be a good *common Rule*. There are Places and Rewards proportioned to Mens Abilities and Services: A Clergyman is not to be set aside as uselefs because he is not a *Waterland*; and he may deserve *something* tho' he has not defended the Faith so learnedly as that most able Champion: But if the *Patron* knows of any Person who has done eminent Service to *Christianity* by his Writings and Labours, and is destitute, or shamefully neglected by the *Publick*, *detur dignissimo* must supersede all private Obligations. He is *every* Man's *Relation* and *Friend*, and it ought to be the *Concern* of every Man to support and reward him, tho' Men of such *Publick Characters* are the *more immediate* Care of *publick Patrons*. Let Men but have *Honesty* enough to make a *Conscience* of doing their Duty, and they will *generally* have Judgment sufficient to direct them; but if they take Advice of their *Interests* or *Passions* they will be misguided in the plainest Cases. This brings to my Mind an Answer which the learned and pious Bishop *Hooper* gave to a particular Friend of mine, to whom his Lordship offer'd a *Dignity* in his Cathedral. My Friend thought fit to decline the Offer, and took the Liberty to recommend to his Lordship's Favour the *Great* and *Good* Mr. *Norris*, who, to the Reproach and Infamy of the Nation, had then only

a little Living, and died unpossessed of any *Dignity* in the Church to which he had been such an Ornament. The Bishop acknowledged Mr. *Norris's* extraordinary Merit, express'd the utmost Esteem for him, and the strongest Inclination to serve him, but withal replied, that *he was not in his Diocese*; as if the Success of his Labours and Influence of his excellent Writings were *local*, confin'd only to the particular Diocese in which he was beneficed. A Person who does *publick* Service makes the PUBLICK his Debtor; and the whole *Christian World* is oblig'd to any Man that does eminent Service to Christianity. I have the greatest Regard for the Memory of his Lordship, and would not have mention'd this Instance to his Disadvantage, if it had not been to shew how little the Nature of *Patronage* had been consider'd, even by this very *judicious* and *conscientious* Prelate.

I shall end this Letter with the Example of that knowing and wise Princess, QUEEN ELIZABETH, as it is recorded by Mr. *Strype*, in Vol. I. of her *Annals*, p. 550. "The dangerous Encrease of *Papists* in the North and other Parts of the Realm, was occasioned chiefly by the Want of learned Ministers, who might preach to the People, and inform them in true Religion. And this was to be done by encouraging the Study of *Divinity* in the UNIVERSITIES; which was now much laid aside, since they saw how *Ecclesiastical* Places and Preferments were dispos'd of; how, not the *Learned* so much as the DEPENDANTS upon GREAT MEN, were advanced in the Church. Therefore it was thought advisable to revive the Hopes of *Students*; and for that Purpose, the QUEEN sent a kind Letter to the *High-Chancellor* of
" Cam-

“ Cambridge (and the like, very probably, to
 “ the *High-Chancellor* of Oxford) which he forth-
 “ with sent to his *Vice-Chancellor*. The Purport
 “ of the Letter was to this Effect, viz. That
 “ such as were well learned in divine Things, and
 “ should be commended to her for such by the Uni-
 “ versity, she should take Care of, and see them
 “ preferred to Places in the Church, both of Wealth
 “ and Honour; and that according to their ME-
 “ RITS: And that she would allow honorary Sala-
 “ ries to hopeful Youth; and that she would prefer
 “ none but such as either the Bishops or University
 “ should recommend to her by their Testimonials. The
 “ Benefit whereof was this, that whereas before
 “ it was not Learning so much as Ambition and
 “ waiting upon Noblemen, and depending upon
 “ the Interest of the Great ones at Court, that
 “ made way to Preferment; now there would
 “ be no further Cause for Scholars to be solicitous
 “ about Livelihoods or Rewards. The *Vice-*
 “ *Chancellor* answered the Chancellor at large,
 “ signifying the great Joy of the University at the
 “ Royal Letter: And that he doubted not, but
 “ the Studies of some, discouraged by the misera-
 “ ble Tossings, and frequent Changes of the
 “ Times, might now easily be inflamed by such
 “ Promises: And he took Order that the Heads
 “ of every College, should take down the Names
 “ and Degrees of all such as were intended for
 “ the Study of Divinity, which were sent up to
 “ the Chancellor at Court.” This was one of the
 Methods by which that most politick Princess
 consulted the Prosperity of the Publick, the Se-
 curity and Honour of her Crown. And her suc-
 cess was answerable to her Wisdom.

LETTER IV.

HAVING prov'd that *Patronage* is a TRUST for which every Man must be accountable, *Patrons* are obliged to take care into whose Hands they resign it. The Practice of *buying* and *selling* Livings, as it is *commonly* managed, is absolutely unlawful. The best Bidder is sure to be the Purchaser, tho' a known *Infidel*, or an open *Debauchee*. But if such Sales be justifiable, it is justifiable to buy and sell *Religion*, and to make a Gain of the Salvation of Mankind: for if a Man sells, or leaves by *Will*, a *Patronage* to one who, in all Probability, will nominate the most unfit Person that he can find, he makes a *Sale* or a *Deed of Gift* of the Honour of *Religion*, and the eternal Happiness of all those who are likely to be lost under the Ministry of a bad Pastor. In short, it is an Absurdity to suppose that a *Christian* is at Liberty to throw up a Trust into the Hands of one who will, probably, abuse it to the Dishonour of *Christianity*. I cannot help, on this Occasion, taking Notice of the Conduct of a worthy Nobleman, the late Earl of *Pembroke*, who, when his Steward proposed to raise a Sum of Money by the Sale of Livings, declared, that he would sooner sell all the Plate that he had in his House. An Opinion worthy the Piety of a true *Christian*! A Declaration worthy the Greatness of an ancient Nobleman!

Ano-

Another Consequence from the Nature of *Patronage*, consider'd as a *Trust*, is This; that *Patrons* ought not *generally*, if *ever*, to make an *absolute* Promise of any *particular* Preferment, since 'tis *rarely* possible to be certain *beforehand* whether the Performance of this Promise will be consistent with their *antecedent* Obligations as *Trustees*. For, if the Person *were* or *should afterwards* become any Way unfit for Promotion, or unworthy of it, he ought not to have it; or, if by giving it to another the *Ends* of all Ecclesiastical Preferment will be *better* answer'd, it ought to be so applied. This was a *prior* and *immutable* Obligation which is strictly bound upon every *Patron* as a *Christian*, and a Member of the *Community*. As a *Christian*, nothing can discharge him from the Duty of acting so as may best promote the Interest of *Christianity*; as a Member of the *Community*, he is perpetually oblig'd to study the Good of it. And therefore, since 'tis a known and plain Rule in Casuistry, that no *subsequent* Obligation can destroy a *prior*, the Patron continues as much concern'd, in point of Conscience, to give any particular Preferment to the Person who, in all Appearance, best deserves it and will do most Good with it, as if he had never made any such Promise; consequently, the Promise can never carry any Force or Obligation, where it cannot be perform'd without Injury to the Merits of other Claimants, and Prejudice to Religion, Those being Considerations that must always take Place of all others. To make This plainer, if possible, I shall resume a Case which I have already put in a former Letter.

We will suppose a certain Sum of Money given to *charitable* Uses, and Persons appointed by the
Donor

Donor to distribute it to the properest Objects, and to each Object according to the necessity of his Circumstances ; I ask, is any one of these *Trustees* at Liberty to promise a *particular* Person such a *particular* Share of the Money, before he knows what greater Objects of Charity, and what Number of them may appear. Thus in relation to *Ecclesiastical Preferments*, HERE is a certain Revenue appropriated by publick Authority for the Support of *Religion*, and the *Maintenance* and *Reward* of a Number of Men who are devoted to the Service of it. All Patrons, therefore, being under a *perpetual* Obligation to give their *Preferments* with a View to these Ends, they cannot be at liberty to make any Promise that shall bind them to act *inconsistently* with them. In short, the Matter stands thus : It can never be lawful to make such a Promise, but where there is an *high Probability* that the Person, to whom it is made, is, and will *continue* to be fit and worthy, and that no Circumstances will arise that may make it *more* fit and proper to give the *Preferment* to another ; for, wherever there were at the time of *making* the Promise, or *afterwards* should happen, such an Unfitness in the Person ; or any other Candidate should appear who *ought to have had the Preference in case no such Promise had been made* ; the Promise stands for nothing, forasmuch as there is an Obligation *superior* to it which nothing can vacate. I would willingly be as clear as I possibly can, and therefore I shall once again see how it will appear in another Light, if we suppose a Gentleman intrusted with the Care of recommending a *Physician* to a Person labouring under a dangerous and difficult Distemper. Now, would any one imagine this Gentleman at liberty to recommend

a Quack, or an ignorant, or a dishonest Man, only because he had hastily, or to oblige a Friend, or for any other Reason not respecting the Safety of the sick Person, *promised* such a one that whenever this Person should be sick he shou'd have him for a Patient. Or, if there were several Physicians in the Neighbourhood, one of whom was generally allow'd to be greatly superior to the rest in *Skill*, in *Diligence*, or *Integrity*; I presume all Mankind wou'd judge the *Trustee* bound in Conscience and Honour to employ him under whose Management the Life of the Patient wou'd be manifestly most safe. Where *Patrons* have a true Notion of Religion and the Danger that Men may be in of *perishing eternally* thro' the Neglect or Ignorance of those who are to teach them the Way to Heaven, they wou'd easily see the Aptness of the Comparison and the Force of the Argument drawn from it.

In Cases determinable by common Sense, there is no occasion for any Appeal to Authorities: Yet, if any Regard be due to the Opinion of Great and Good Men, I am supported by the Practice of a Prelate of our own Church, very eminent for his Abilities as well as Virtues, in a Reign distinguish'd by a Bench of the most able and pious Bishops. The Historian informs us, that A. B. Sandys refus'd to promise a *particular* Preferment in his Gift when it was requested of him by his dear Friend, the LORD TREASURER BURLEIGH, whom, of all Men, he was most desirous to oblige; alledging, that he thought such *absolute* and *particular* Promises unjustifiable in *Patrons*, whose Nomination to an *Ecclesiastical* Preferment was not like common Favours, of *arbitrary* Disposition, but an Act of *Justice* and *Piety*, which are Matters
of

of *strict Duty*. And the many great Inconveniences attending the common Practice of making such Promises are daily experienc'd. The most worthy Men are affham'd of the little Artifices, and mean Importunities by which they are usually extorted; the forward Boldness of the least deserving thus get the Start of modest and honourable Merit; and Men, by such *imaginary* Obligations, tie up their Hands from doing their Duty, and then think it a very good Plea for a very bad Nomination to say, that they had given *their Word*. Given their Word! What if they had promis'd to discountenance Virtue and encourage Vice? What if they had promis'd to prefer a *Jew* or a *Turk* to a Promotion in the *Christian Church*? Wou'd it be their Duty to keep such a rash Promise, or to break it? I conceive, there cou'd be no Room for a Doubt in so plain a Case. But why wou'd such an Engagement be void of itself? Because every *Christian* is under a *prior* and *indisputable* Tie, which no subsequent Contract can loosen. So that if a *Patron* has given *his Word* an hundred Times over, he is as much oblig'd to regard the *Ends* of all Ecclesiastical Promotions, and to answer them to the utmost of his Power, as if he had enter'd into no Engagement at all.

But, tho' I condemn the frequent Practice of making *absolute* Promises of *particular* Preferments, yet I think it not only lawful, but highly commendable, to give the deserving *general* Assurances, in the plainest and strongest Terms, that they shall be provided for at a proper Time, and in a proper Manner. This would give Industry Resolution and Courage; give almost new Powers and Faculties. For want of this Countenance and Encouragement (which animates a generous

Mind, enlivens and invigorates the whole Man) how many wear away an useleſs and burthenſome Life in Obscurity, in Spleen and Vapours, who might have ſhin'd with Luſtre in *Publick*, and been a Bleſſing and an Ornament to it, if their good Inclinations had been cheriſh'd, and their Abilities aided, by the Favour and Aſſiſtance of the Rich and Powerful. I cannot more ſtrongly repreſent this Caſe than in the Words of a late Piece, intitled, *The Clergyman's Right of Maintenance vindicated*; ſays the Author, p. 63; " A
 " neglected Condition is attended with inſuperable
 " Diſadvantages; not only with the Want of the
 " proper Means of Knowledge, but a Diſinclina-
 " tion and Incapacity to make uſe of them. He
 " will neither have any Appetite towards his Stu-
 " dies, nor be capable of attending upon them
 " without Diſtraction, whoſe Mind is fill'd with
 " anxious and diſquieting Thoughts. Anxiety
 " of Mind is as inconfiſtent with Study and Con-
 " templation, as it is inſeparable from Poverty
 " and Diſtreſs. The Cares of the World will
 " ſometimes intrude themſelves, and interrupt
 " the Attention in the moſt ſecret Retirement,
 " at the moſt improper Seasons, and in the moſt
 " important Duties. They hinder an Improve-
 " ment in every perſonal Qualification, and ob-
 " ſtruct the Succeſs of every Part of the Paſtoral
 " Office. Continual Difficulties, frequent Diſ-
 " appointments, and the Neglect of the World
 " gradually impair the Powers of the Body and
 " the Faculties of the Mind. That *Vigour* of
 " *Conſtitution*, without which the Burthen of their
 " Office will be too heavy for them, will decay.
 " That *Vivacity* of *Spirit*, which excites a noble
 " Ambition, and animates Men in the Purſuit of
 " laudable

" laudable Attempts, will languish, if not expire.
 " *That Warmth of Imagination and Fertility of*
 " *Invention*, which would enliven and beautify
 " their Compositions, will grow cold and barren.
 " Even their *Perception* will become dull, their
 " *Reason* enfeebled and obscur'd by heavy Melan-
 " cholly. Where is that *Gbearfulness* which
 " renders Conversation delightful? That *Sweet-*
 " *ness of Temper* which attracts the Affections of
 " Mankind? The *Spirits* are oppressed, and the
 " Dispositions sower'd; the one cannot exert
 " themselves, and the other is too much upon
 " the Ferment. If the Mind sinks under the op-
 " pressive Weight, the Behaviour of the Man
 " will be Mean and Sordid, and, to use the Lan-
 " guage of *Ecclesiasticus*, *he will make himself an*
 " *Underling to foolish [or wicked] Men*. If an
 " uncommon Force of Mind enables him to bear
 " up against the united Opposition of Poverty
 " and Contempt, he will be apt to grow captious
 " and turbulent; uneasy to himself and trouble-
 " some to others. *Contempt* (even without the
 " Help of *Poverty*) has a mighty Force towards
 " creating a Diffidence and Distrust of ourselves.
 " It intimidates the Mind, and renders Men in-
 " capable of doing Justice to their natural Abili-
 " ties. Thus they are overlook'd by the World,
 " when their Incapacity to appear in a more ad-
 " vantagious Light arises only from their not
 " having better Encouragement." To which I
 " will add, that when they have been long buried
 " in a *low Station*, unobserv'd and unrewarded,
 " they grow too *inconsiderable* for a *better*; *Ne-*
 " *glect* has render'd them despis'd; *Real Contempt*
 " begets *imaginary Demerit*; and *ill Treatment*, by
 " the *Continuance* of it, becomes a Pretence for ne-

ver making the *injur'd* Satisfaction: As *Success*, on the other Hand, grows up into *Merit*, and one Preferment *qualifies* a Man for an higher, 'till an exalted Station becomes a most *natural* and *proper* Promotion, without any Regard to *personal* Abilities and Qualifications. It will not be expected that I should produce Instances of this latter kind; and for Fear of offending the *Modesty* of others, I shall pass over the former too. The one I am unwilling to put to the Blush by taking publick Notice of their ill Success and their Title to better Treatment: The others I shall leave to blush in Secret, under the Consciousness of having met with better than they deserv'd. The Unfortunate, I hope, will go on chearfully in their Labours, being fully perswaded that they have a *Patron* in *Heaven* who will *render to every one according to their Works*; and all the Ill that I am inclin'd to wish to any who have been too amply recompens'd, is, that their unmerited Possessions may not turn to their Condemnation hereafter, as they are a Reproach to them here.

Thus I have endeavour'd to set forth the *Nature* of *Patronage*: A Subject, I am perswaded, not duly understood, because not duly consider'd, by Persons of a much better Understanding and more extensive Knowledge, than the Author of these Letters imagines himself to be. In the *main* I dare undertake to defend what I have advanc'd; and if any one be surpriz'd at some of my Positions, perhaps his Surprise may be owing, not to their *Extravagance*, but their *Newness*; and may not be any Proof that the Writer is mistaken, but that the Reader had not before consider'd the Question.

I can only say in Excuse for any Errors that I may be guilty of, that I have erred (if I have erred)

erred) for Want of *Judgment*, and not of *Care*. I have long and often and much weighed the Arguments that I have offer'd, and the longer the oftner and the more I weigh them, the more I am convinc'd of their Truth.

To enumerate the many scandalous Abuses of the important Trust reposed in PATRONS, is an Office too ungrateful to my Temper, and too offensive to the Persons concern'd, for me to undertake. To propose any Methods for the Regulation of those Abuses, is what I as little like to do. The former might have the Appearance of ill Nature and ill Manners; the latter, of Vanity and Presumption. If my Notion be just, the Abuses and the proper Regulation of them will easily be seen by those who are willing to see them; and as easily be regulated by those who are willing to alter their Conduct: The rest I might sooner provoke than convince, and instead of Converts make Enemies.

But without bringing upon myself any dishonourable Imputations from the Censorious, or giving any Offence to the Captious, I may desire those *Patrons*, into whose Hands these Papers may chance to fall, seriously and maturely to consider the Subject, as a Matter of very great Consequence to the Welfare of the Society, the Interest of Religion, and the future eternal Happiness of Mankind; and, consequently, as a Duty which it highly concerns them to discharge with a *disinterested Fidelity*.

If we view this Point, as it affects the *reasonable Expectations*, I may say *Demands*, of a Number of Men who have cut themselves off from any other Expectations, from any other Provision, from any other Means of Happiness in the Community,

nity, common *Honesty* requires *Patrons* to do them *Justice*; common *Compassion* calls for a tender Sense of their hard Fate. To *defraud* them of those Wages which they have earn'd, of those Honours which they have merited by a diligent Employment of their Time and Parts in a Service the most honourable in itself, and the most useful to human Nature, to civil Society, and to Government, is *Injustice* aggravated by *Ingratitude*. To defraud those Men of their *Maintenance* and *Reward*, who, when defrauded, are the most *injur'd*, because the most *helpless* Set of Men in the Commonwealth, is *Injustice* aggravated by *Cruelty*. How movingly, how affectionately does the *Scripture* set forth the Compassion of our CREATOR towards those Servants *whose Wages are kept back* when with Labour and Toil they have reap'd down their Master's Corn! And shall not he hear the Cries, and see the Distresses of many *Clergymen* who have labour'd long and faithfully in *Christ's Vineyard*, while their Wages are detain'd by those who are appointed to give them their Portion of Meat in due Season and Measure, only to satisfy the *Humour*, or to serve the *Interest* of the *Stewards*; while others, who have been less diligent, if not *all the Day idle*, if not unfaithful to the *Rights* of their Great Master, have a double Portion of Hire, which they sometimes make no better Use of than for an Opportunity to enrich themselves, and to despise their Fellow Servants.

If from *private* Injuries, and *private* Grievances, we turn our Eyes to the Dishonour and the Damages which the *Publick* sustains by the Abuse of *Patronage*, the Prospect grows more melancholy, as the Consequences spread wider; even thro' all Conditions of Life, thro' all Ranks and Orders

Orders of Men, up to the Throne itself. Whatever may be the Sentiments of *modern Politicians*, it was the Opinion of our wiser Forefathers, that *Religion* was absolutely necessary to the *present*, as well as *future* Prosperity of Mankind, whether in a *single* or *social* Capacity: As one of your Correspondents intimated, by way of *Introduction* to a Course of Papers on the Subject, the Happiness of human Nature depends upon a regular Observance of the *several* Duties of Religion; the Happiness of *Society* must arise from every Member's acting agreeably to the Relation that Men stand in one to another; and the Belief of the great *Truths* of Religion are a necessary Sanction to induce Mankind under all Circumstances to observe those Duties, and to act in Conformity to those Relations; and further, as *Revelation* teacheth all those Duties plainly, and enforces them more strongly, than *unassisted Reason* is able of itself to do, the Belief of *Christianity* is highly beneficial to human Nature, highly useful to human Society. This being the Case, what *Axiom* can be plainer than that the Nomination of the most learned, pious, upright, diligent, and prudent Men to Preferments in the *Church*, will make a *People* the most happy, a *Nation* the most flourishing, a *Government* the most secure, because they will be best able and the most careful to defend *Christianity*, to inculcate its Truths, to explain and enforce its Precepts both by Instruction and Example; to teach, to admonish, to reprove and exhort with the greatest Success? Consequently, those *Patrons* are the best Friends to *Mankind*, the truest Patriots of their *Country*, and the most faithful Subjects to their *King*, who in their Nomination of Persons to *Ecclesiastical* Promotions, have

have the strictest Regard to their Abilities as Scholars, and their Qualifications as *Christians*. And what other Method can be substituted in the room of this so effectual a One towards promoting Honour of God, and the Advancement of his true Religion, which must ever rise and fall both in Credit and Interest with the Characters and Credit of those who are to officiate in religious Offices?

If from *this* World we remove the Scene into the next, what before rais'd our Concern and Indignation must strike every serious Mind with Horror. The Mischiefs grow infinitely greater, and will be perpetuated to all Eternity. I am writing, it is presum'd, to *Christians*, who believe that Men must be happy or miserable for ever, as they believe or disbelieve the Doctrines, as they observe or neglect the Duties of *Christianity*; and that their Happiness and Misery will be greater or less, in Proportion to their Defects and Improvements in *Christian* Perfection. In God's Name then let me ask any Patron what is the *natural* Way of making People *Good Christians*, but by able and faithful *Pastors*? Does not the Scripture, does not common Sense suppose this, and common Experience prove the Truth of it? Are there not, in consequence of it, particular Degrees of Happiness promis'd to such as by their Instructions and Example forward the *Salvation* of their People? Are not particular Degrees of Misery threatned to those through whose Neglect they *perish everlastingly*? Are not we all ready enough to object this by way of Blame and Reproach to *bad* Clergymen? But if This be so, let any Man, if he can, shew me a Reason why *Patrons* are not answerable, as well as *Pastors*, for the Lives of the People

ple committed to the *Pastors* Care. *Pastors* are intrusted with the Charge of making People *religious*, and *Patrons* are intrusted with the Charge of appointing Persons *able* and *fit* to do it. Are not *Patrons* then as accessory as the *Pastors* to the Damnation of the People, if they be not careful to make a proper Nomination. And, pray now, what are the Talents and Qualifications which naturally make *able* and *fit* *Pastors*? Why, such as bear a Relation to the Office of a *Pastor*, an Aptness and Capacity to perform the *Duties*, and answer the *Ends* of it. But as for *political Attachments*, *Affinity*, *Friendship*, *private Inclinations* or *Obligations*, I wou'd fain know what Relation these Circumstances, any more than *Stature* or *Shape*, bear to the *Duties* and *Ends* of the *Ministerial Function*. Will a servile Attendance on the Levies of Great Men, a Dexterity in the Management of a Corporation, an active Zeal in the Service of a Knight of the Shire, with the Intemperance the Noise and Tumult usually accompanying such Business; will any thing of this Kind encrease his Knowledge, or improve his Judgment in Divinity? Will they add any thing to his Piety, give him any one Moral Virtue, any single Accomplishment, that can make him more useful in his Profession? On the contrary, will they not take up too much of his Time and Thoughts; give a wrong Turn to his Passions and Affections; fill his Mind with *secular* and *worldly* Schemes, when it ought to be employed in the Business of his Calling, and inflam'd with the Love of God, and an ardent Desire to save his Flock, instead of that furious Heat and implacable Hatred which *political Agencies* beget in them? So that what is generally made the GRAND Recommendation to the
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the favour of the *Gentry*, the *Nobility* and *others*, is so far from being a real Qualification for any Ecclesiastical Preferment, that it naturally unfits and disqualifies a Man for a conscientious Discharge of his *spiritual* Office. And as for the *Merit* of *Friendship*, or *Affinity*, I should be glad to be inform'd in what respect they make a Man *wiser* or *better*, or a jot the more qualified to do *God* and *Man* Service in the proper Business of a *Clergyman*. And if they do not, how can *Patrons* answer it to the Trust repos'd in them, when they promote *Relations*, *Friends* and *Politicians*, not only in preference to others of *superior* Merit, as *Clergymen*, but many times without any competent Share of *real* Merit, or Fitness for the Promotion to which they advance them? It may help some *Patrons* to apprehend this Matter if they would only, in Imagination, assume the *Episcopal* Character. For, whatever ought to be made the requisite Qualifications for Orders, should likewise determine a *Patron* in his *Nomination*. For, what is *Ordination* but *consecrating* or *devoting* a Person to the Service of God in religious Offices? It is *impowering* and *obliging* him (I say *obliging* him, since after such *Consecration* he is not at liberty whether he will attend upon those Offices to which he is *devoted*) to wait at God's Altar, to administer the Sacraments, to preach his Word, and instruct People in the Doctrines and Duties of *Christianity*. And what is the *Patron's* Business? Nothing else but to determine what *particular* *Clergyman* shall exercise this Function in such a *particular* Place: And therefore, whatever *qualifies* a Man for Orders, ought to *recommend* him to *Preferment*; and whatever *disqualifies* him, whatever makes him *unfit* to be ordain'd,

tain'd, *disqualifies* or makes him *unfit* for *Preferment*. So, as to *Degrees* of Qualification, if a *Bishop* were to ordain *one* Person only out of *several* Candidates, who offer'd themselves for Orders, he ought, without all Peradventure, to give the *Preference* to *him* who should appear *best* fitted to answer the *Ends* of the Ministerial Office. And ought not the *Patron* to be determined in his Choice by the same Reasons, since *he nominates* a Person to exercise *the very same Office*, which the *Bishop* impowers him to exercise: The same way of reasoning holds equally with respect to such as are nominated to the *Government* of *Christ's Church*. And as to any *Dignities*, which are suppos'd to be conferr'd as *Rewards*, what are the *Services* for which one is suppos'd to be rewarded? His having answer'd the *Ends* of his Function consequently, he who has done it the most *effectually*, deserves the *greatest Reward*, the *biggest Dignities*. Those *Ends* are, the *Interest* of *Christianity*, and the *Eternal Salvation* of *Christians*; and therefore, whenever either of those important Points suffer, as they certainly must, by such Methods of Promotion as are now in Use: will the GREAT JUDGE of the whole Earth, at the final Day of Retribution, accept it as a good Plea from a *Patron*, that he had been a long time acquainted with such a Clergyman, and cou'd not decently refuse him; that another had married his Cousin, or serv'd him, or the *Party* at an Election; or that some over-bearing great Man recommended him, and therefore that he was bound in Honour or Interest to provide for him? Will these Reasons atone for Dishonour done to *Christ*, or the eternal Ruin of those for whom he died? I am not at all surpris'd to see *Infidels*, or giddy young Men given

up to *Pleasure*, or other *Worldlings* wholly immersed'd in *Projects* and insensible of any other Impressions, unaffected by such solemn, such awful Considerations; but when grave and serious and seemingly *religious* Persons sacrifice every thing to their present Schemes, it gives great Occasion for Scandal to the Enemy, great Offence to pious and good *Christians*, and is the Cause of much *Deism*. If I be warmly affected, it is by a Subject that ought warmly to affect every one who is capable of a serious Reflection. I acknowledge myself to be greatly affected and greatly concern'd, and I heartily wish that I were capable of infusing into others the same Affections which I feel in my own Breast. If I cou'd, I shou'd do a greater, a more publick, and a more lasting Service, than by the most voluminous Writings. But, it seems, no good Effect can reasonably be expected from any Arguments, how plain and how strong soever. I have been told, by more than One Person, that *Writing* will signify nothing, *Men being determin'd to act as They please*. If the World be so very bad, I am sorry for it; but it is more than any Man upon Earth can tell. Truth plac'd in a clear Light will have a *natural Tendency* to convince the Judgment and awaken the Conscience; and sometimes the plainest Discourses, unadorn'd with the captivating Embellishments of Art, will produce unexpected Effects; if not by their own Strength, yet under the assisting Influence of the Divine Spirit, who can subdue the strongest Prejudices, and soften the most obdurate Heart. *God's Strength is made perfect in Weakness*. The powerful Efficacy of his Grace is then most manifested when it makes use of the meanest Instruments; and such an imperfect Performance as mine,

mine, if God pleases, may have as great an Effect as the most artful and elaborate Work. I must observe farther, that this Objection will prove a great deal too much, *viz.* that because Experience shews that it is extremely difficult to persuade Men to leave off any Vice to which they have strong Inclinations, and have been long habituated: therefore it is proper to leave them to the free Enjoyment of their Pleasures, and not give them any needless Uneasiness, or Offence. If any one be hardy enough to patronize this licentious Doctrine, there is, I confess, but little hopes of affecting him, any other way than by raising his Resentment. However, we are not answerable for *Effects*; we can only use the natural Means, and leave the *Event* to Providence. What I have written, may, at least, have this good Use, *viz.* to occasion some abler Person to consider this *new*, but *important*, Subject more distinctly, and to treat it more accurately. If I have laid down any Propositions which I cannot make Good, I shall readily give them up. If I have been defective in the manner of stating or proving any true Proposition, I shall gladly thank any one that will improve it. If any Person rejects the whole without Examination, or objects without assigning Reasons, he can merit nothing but Detestation, or Pity. What I affirm is This, that all *Patronage* is a *Trust* for which every *Patron* must be accountable to God. They are *Trustees* or *Stewards* appointed to give the *Clergy* their *proper Share* of that *Maintenance* and *Reward* which the *Legislature* has *appropriated* for *that Purpose*; and every Man's *proper Share* is such a *Proportion* as shall be proportionable to his *Qualifications* and *Services*; his *Capacity* and *Industry* in answering the *Ends* for
which

which the Revenue was appointed; and those Ends must be the *Propagation of the Christian Religion*, and the *Eternal Salvation of Christians*. The Deductions which I have made from the *General Notion*, I think, are obvious, because manifestly tending to answer the *main Ends*. Upon these Points I rest the Cause. But before I conclude, I must enter a Caveat against arguing from *distant* and *uncertain* Consequences in answer to *present* and *certain* Effects. Such Methods as daily beget Ignorance, a decay of Piety and other Evils of the like Nature, are in themselves unjustifiable. Such as have an *apparent natural Tendency* to produce the contrary Effects ought to be followed without any regard to what may, or may not happen, no Body knows when, and how. *Patrons* are to be guided in their Choice by the same Rules (as I observed before) which guide *Christian Bishops* in their Acceptance of Persons *fit* to be *ordain'd*. The proper Qualifications for the one are the proper Recommendations to the other. They must be drawn from the *Nature* and *Intention* of their *Office*, and be regulated by the plain Precepts and Directions of the *Scripture*. To prejudice Religion in the *several Particulars*, and yet pretend to consult its Interest upon the *whole*, is to act very wickedly, and to talk very weakly; seldom proceeds from an upright Heart, and never can answer the pretended Purposes. It is departing from the *Simplicity* and *Godly Sincerity* prescrib'd and practis'd by *Christ*, and cutting out crooked serpentine Paths for their own Pleasure, or Interest. It is shutting *Providence* out of the World, and undertaking to govern it better by the Maxims of *human Policy*.

Of the Sanctions of Religion.

A

S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT

The *Affizes* at BURY, *July* 28, 1738.

And Printed at the Request of

The HIGH-SHERIFF,

AND

The GRAND-JURIES.

A₂

of the Functions of Religion

SERMON

PREACHED AT

The New Church, New York, 1738

And Printed at the Request of

THE HIGH-SHERIFF

AND

THE GRAND-JURIES

As

HEBR. XI. 26.

For he had Respect unto the Recompence of the Reward.

THE Person here spoken of was *Moses*, the great Ancestor of the *Jews*; by whose Example the Apostle intends to animate the *Christians* under their severe Persecutions. He sets before them a List of ancient Worthies, but more particularly reminds them of their great Leader and Law-giver, who resisted the strongest Temptations, and performed the greatest Actions, through a firm Persuasion of a future Recompence; for *he had Respect unto the Recompence of the Reward.*

What this *Recompence of Reward* was, Interpreters have disputed; some understanding it of the *Earthly Canaan*, That excellent Land which was promised to *Abraham* and his Seed; others, of the *Heavenly Canaan*, of which the other was a Type----That the *Earthly* cannot be meant in this Place our learned Bishop *Bull* has clearly demonstrated. For, as he observes, if This had been the Reward to which *Moses* had Respect, he certainly missed of it, since he never set his Foot in that Land, having only seen it afar off from Mount *Pisgah*, a little before his Death, *Deut.* xxxiv. 4, 5. Neither did he ever *in his Life* receive any *other* reasonable Reward of those Heroick Enterprizes which he undertook: From whence he argues, very justly, that it was a Re-

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ward in *another World* which he expected; since, otherwise, we suppose, what seems to be a very great Absurdity, that the Apostle would mention it to the Honour of *MOSES's* Character, that he was miserably deceiv'd by a vain Expectation, and imagin'd that such an Instance could be any Encouragement to us *Christians* in our Duty.

From the Words of my Text, I shall undertake to prove these three Points.

I. The *Lawfulness* of our having Respect to the *Recompence of Reward* as a *Motive of our Obedience*.

II. That without This *Recompence of Reward* as a *Sanction* to enforce the Duties of Religion, there cannot be to all Mankind, under all possible Circumstances of Life, a sufficient Motive of Obedience; and, consequently, that the Sanctions of Religion are absolutely necessary to the Support of it.

III. That, tho' we should grant, what is not true, that all the Duties of Religion are in themselves so excellent and so advantageous to every Man *here* that the practice of Them *always* carries with it a reasonable Enforcement, yet that the Sanctions of future Rewards and Punishments are an *additional* Security to the Observance of Religious Duties; and that the *Christian* Religion has greatly the Advantage over *Natural* Religion, because its Sanctions are stronger, and more clearly reveal'd.

IV. I shall conclude with a few Words by Way of Exhortation.

1st, I am to shew the *Lawfulness* of our having Respect to the Christian Recompence of Reward, as a Motive of our Obedience.

It has always been the unhappy Fate of Religion, that its Enemies have taken advantage of the Weakness of its Friends, and betrayed them into Notions subversive of Religion under the pretence of improving it. They have suggested to the sanguine Disposition of the *Enthusiast*, that the Perfection of our Obedience consists in its *Disinterestedness* and a *Disregard* to ourselves and our own Happiness. The more excellent and acceptable is our Obedience, the less we attend to the Advantage of it to *ourselves*. The Love of God, a Reverence to his Laws, and a Desire to promote his Glory, These, it seems, are the refin'd and sublime Ends which, *alone*, we *Christians* ought to propose in all our Actions; while every Consideration, respecting our *own Interest* in the Practice of our Duty, is *mean* and *mercenary*. But all this fine Talk is in Reality affrontive to the Divine Nature under the plausible Pretence of paying him the greatest Respect. We *then* honour God most when we entertain the truest Notions of him and of the Design of his Laws; and we then think the most truly and justly of them both, when we consider God as incapable of receiving any Advantage to himself from our Obedience, and his Laws as intended only for the Happiness both of the Body and Mind of his Creatures. Can a Creature be profitable unto its Creator, was *Job's* Question? And it would be blasphemous to answer, that we could. The supreme Being has existed from all Eternity, and was from all Eternity an all-sufficient Source of Happiness to himself; not capable either of

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Diminution, or Encrease. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose the *independent Cause* of all Things to be *dependent* upon the Things which he himself has made, for his own Happiness.

GOD being thus infinitely happy *in*; and *from HIMSELF*, we cannot, according to *our* Conceptions of his Nature, assign any other End of the Creation than the Communication of Happiness; and This, likewise, must we conceive to be the *End* of his *Laws*. He created us that we might be happy; and Those Rules of Action which in his Wisdom and Goodness he has prescribed to us, are the Means by which we may attain the proper Happiness of our Natures. God's Commands are always an *Argument* of their *Fitness*, consider'd as the *Means* of *Happiness* to his Creatures, tho' we cannot always discover it; and a *Fitness*, or Tendency in any Action to produce That End, is as clear a Proof of *his Will*. Whatever God *wills* must be, upon the whole, *best*, That is, most conducing to the Happiness of his Creatures; whatever evidently conduces most, upon the whole, to the *Benefit* of Mankind, we may be assur'd that he *wills* it.

This, then, being the Case, it is absurd to think of separating the *Glory* of God from our *own Happiness*, which was his *End* in creating us, and giving us *Laws*; or to imagine, that what was worthy to be the Motive of *Creation* and *Revelation* to an infinitely perfect Being, should be a Motive unbecoming *us* in the Observance of those Rules which he has reveal'd to us.

2dly; But we may go farther, and affirm, that it is in the Nature of Things absolutely impossible that we *can* be oblig'd to act without any *Re-
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gard to our own Happiness. Every Being that is capable of Happiness must necessarily desire and intend to be happy. *Animals* are directed by *Instinct* to their proper Good. *Man* has *Reason* and *Revelation* to guide him. They differ in the *Means* of Happiness, and in the *Methods* of discovering it, because they differ in their *Natures*; but all Creatures, capable of pleasing and painful Sensations, must pursue *Happiness* as their *common End*. Now, what can be more *irrational* than to say, it is unlawful for us to do what by the irresistible Law of our Nature we can no more avoid doing, than a Stone, thrown up into the Air, can avoid falling to the Earth again by the Law of Gravitation? But, tho' Happiness be the general Desire and Aim of our Nature, we may pursue this *general End* without thinking of it in *every particular Action*, because the Satisfaction *immediately* accompanying the Action may be a sufficient Inducement to the Performance of it. Yet, This does not at all interfere with the Force of the general Law, since *Happiness* is the *Spring* and *Motive* of Action, even where we do not immediately think of it; neither would the Consciousness of it destroy the Religion and Merit of the Action. Thus, for Instance, the *Enthusiasts* tell us, we must love and esteem God, because the Perfections of his Nature are amiable and worthy of Esteem. We say so too. But then we affirm also, that This Esteem is consistent with a View to our Happiness. For, suppose any of us should reason thus with ourselves; every rational Act of the Mind will be accompanied with a suitable Complacency; God being the most amiable Being, the Love of him is the most rational Act of the

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Mind; the more I love him, the more agreeably shall I act to Reason, and consequently the more Delight and Pleasure shall I receive from That Passion; I will therefore contemplate the Perfections of his Nature, that my Love of him being the more intense, and my Esteem the more elevated, I may make myself the *happier*; if to this Consideration we should add the *Reward* which God has promis'd in the next Life to Those who love him; I ask, would the Consciousness of the Satisfaction arising to ourselves *immediately* from the Love of God and the Recompence awaiting us in the next World, and our making these blessed Effects a *Motive* to use our best Endeavours to *increase* our Love, that we may increase our Happiness; would This Intention, I say, of promoting our own Happiness by loving God, take off from the *Religion* of the Passion, and make it less acceptable to God? So far from it, that every Act is the more *rational*, and consequently the more acceptable to God, the more distinctly we understand the *Nature* and *Consequences* of it, and the more constantly we keep them in View. God *therefore* requires us to admire the Excellency and Reasonableness of his Laws, not only because they are excellent and reasonable, but likewise that our *Happiness* in the Observance of them should be the greater; not to *exclude* our own Happiness from being *any* Motive, but to secure, by Means of the universal Desire of Happiness, a Motive that may operate *towards* our Happiness, even while we do not particularly attend to it.

3dly, But farther; what can we think of the Divine Wisdom in *adding* these Sanctions to Religion, if it be unlawful for us to have any *Re-*
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gard to them in our Obedience? In the Holy Scriptures the future Recompence of Reward is every where propounded as a *Motive* to excite and stir us up to good Works. We are promis'd, by way of Encouragement, that *Great shall be our Reward in Heaven*, and that *God who seeth in Secret shall reward us openly*. Nay more, the Holy Scriptures do not only promise the Heavenly Reward, as an Encouragement of our Obedience, but they also require it of us, as an *Instance* of Obedience, that we do seek after it. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*. Again, *Seek those Things which are above, and set your Affections on Things above*. And it was with respect to This Recompence of Reward, that not only *Moses*, but all the eminent Saints of *Old* served God; and the most excellent of the *New Testament* Saints obeyed him, and suffer'd for him upon the same Motive. Nay, our blessed Lord himself, the Perfection of Holiness, in his sinless and meritorious Obedience had respect unto the *Recompence of Reward*; for, it is expressly said, that, *for the Joy that was set before him, he endur'd the Cross, despising the Shame*. And will any one, after all This, presume to assert, that to serve God in Hopes of a Reward, is a servile and sinful Obedience, which was the Obedience of *Patriarchs*, of *Prophets*, of *Apostles*, of *Christ* himself. The Pretence may be, *greater Purity and Perfection*; but the Ground of such Pretence must be, *Pride and Self-Conceit*; and the Consequence, *undermining* Religion under the Notion of *refining* upon it. Let none of us affect to be wiser than God, who has promis'd us a Reward, an exceeding great Reward, as a necessary Sanction to his Laws; and more pure than all those

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pious Persons recorded in the Sacred Writings, with the Captain of our Salvation at the Head of them, who fought the good Fight of Faith, in Hopes of the Crown of Righteousness.

II. And without This *Recompence of Reward*, as a *Sanction* to enforce the Duties of Religion, there could not be to all Mankind, under all possible Circumstances of Life, a sufficient Motive of Obedience; and, consequently, the Sanctions of Religion are not only lawful and consistent with our Duty, but absolutely necessary to the Support of it.

Under my former Head I observ'd, that every Man must unavoidably endeavour to make himself as happy as he can. And such are the various Circumstances, Sentiments, Tempers, and Inclinations of Mankind, that their Happiness in this Life would be continually interfering with each other. One Man would want, and much oftener desire, what another enjoys. Some would have Passions that could not be gratified but at the Prejudice of another. Anger would often prompt to Revenge; Lust to the Defilement of our Neighbour's Bed, and the Dishonour of Families; Poverty and Avarice to Fraud and Injustice; Ambition to various kinds of injurious Treatment. Now, without the Belief of a *future* State of Rewards and Punishments, what is there that can reconcile these clashing Interests, and subdue the disorderly Passions of Mankind? What Consideration that can induce one Man to forego any Opportunity of gratifying his Inclinations, or suffer any Sort of Uneasiness, for the Sake of another? Upon the Supposition of an *After-Reckoning* it may be, upon the whole, the *real* Happiness of every Man to deny himself
Pleasure,

Pleasure, and endure Pain, in *This* Life, on Account of the infinitely superior Happiness and Misery of another after Death. But, *future* Happiness and Misery removed, *present* Pleasure and Pain must be to every one the sole, and an irresistible, Motive of Action.

The *Infidels* pretend that Virtue is its *own* Reward, and can enforce its self without any other; that the Consciousness of acting agreeably to the Rules of *Truth* and *Order* will give more Pleasure than can possibly arise to us from any outward Circumstances; and that the Violation of them will create more Uneasiness than *external* Things can procure by the Means of *Sense*; so that it must always be, upon the whole, the Interest of every Man to be virtuous without any Regard to *Futurity*. But, the Fallacy of This Argument lies in supposing that the *Order* of Things *would* require us to deny ourselves Pleasure, and suffer Uneasiness, for the Good of others; and that in consequence of this Obligation we should enjoy such a Degree of Happiness, or endure such a Degree of Pain, from the Approbation, or Disapprobation of our own Minds: whereas, the *Order* of Things would, in many Instances, be chang'd, by the Removal of a *future State*; and This Obligation, with its consequent Approbation and Disapprobation, would cease. I shall give an Instance by way of Illustration. Suppose a Person without the common Necessaries of Life, expos'd to the severest Cold for want of Covering, and ready to perish for want of Sustenance. If you take away the Belief of a Providence and a future State, what can oblige This unhappy Creature to endure so much Pain, when he might, perhaps, soon remove it by an Act

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Act of *Theft*, or *Robbery*. The *Order of Things*, you say, oblige him. What Order? The Order of Things, the prime, unalterable Law of our *Nature*, says, every Creature has a Right to consult its *own* Happiness, and cannot possibly act otherwise. The Consideration of *future* Happiness and Misery is out of the Question, because in This Case we suppose none. *Present* Good and Evil, therefore, *only*, can influence him; and since by the Necessity of his Nature he must abhor and shun Pain, as a natural Evil, he could not help supplying himself with Cloths and Victuals, by the readiest Means, let it be ever so much to the Prejudice of another. To talk of *balancing* these natural Evils by the Pain of *Remorse*, is Nonsense, because it would be impossible for a rational Creature to be *displeased* with its self for acting according to the *Necessity of its Nature*.

But, there is no Occasion for *Reasoning*, where we can appeal to *Fact*, to the *State of Mankind*, for a Confutation of their Argument. If every Act of *Fraud*, and *Injustice*, were, as they pretend, accompanied with a Degree of Uneasiness that would more than *balance* any possible Evils that we may suffer by abstaining from those Vices, there never *could have been* such a thing as *Fraud*, or *Injustice*, but all Mankind would as necessarily be honest, as they necessarily desire Happiness.

When we speak of the *natural Excellency* of Virtue, we mean, that its Rules are calculated, *in general*, for the Good of Mankind here. The Duties respecting *ourselves* have a natural Tendency to improve and perfect our Nature, and the more we attend to their beneficial Effects, the more we shall admire and observe them. The *relative* Duties conspire as uniformly to the good Order

Order and Government of the World ; but, while Mankind continue to be what they are, so various in their Sentiments and Inclinations, so different and opposite in their Schemes and Pursuits, it will be impossible for every Individual to consult his own particular Happiness without interfering sometimes with the Happiness of another ; and since nothing but the Supposition of a *future State* of Rewards and Punishments can provide for *universal Happiness*, it is as impossible that Virtue can *universally oblige* without it. *Virtue* without a *God*, and *Conscience* without the *Sanctions* of it, may serve well enough for the Subject of an *Essay*, but will never answer the Purposes of Society, and of Religion.

The *Infidel* Scheme of *Moral Virtue* is built upon a false Estimate of *human Nature*, and the best that can be said for their most favourite Advocate for it, is, that he has written a very ingenious *Romance* upon it.

To a Mind *uncorrupted* there is, in most Instances, an inward Pleasure in acting agreeably to the Rules of Virtue ; but whether we resolve this Pleasure into a *Moral Sense*, or the *Approbation* of our *Understanding*, or both, it is very certain that Men often debauch their Natures to so great a Degree, as to become almost insensible ; at least they retain so little of That *inward Feeling*, that it will not serve for a Principle of Action against the forceable Impulses of our Passions, and the strong Power of Habits. But, suppose our Moral Sentiments and Dispositions improved to the highest possible Pitch, while we consist of *Body*, as well as a *Soul*, and our Happiness depends upon our Natures, it is perfectly *Romantick* to imagine that there will not happen many Cases where the
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Observance of Virtue would not give more Pain, than Pleasure, if you take away *future Regards*.

III. But were we to grant, what is not true, that all the Duties of Religion are in themselves so excellent and so advantageous to every Man *here*, that they carry with them, *always*, a reasonable Inforcement, yet the Sanctions of future Rewards and Punishments are an *additional* Security to the Observance of them; and the *Christian* Religion has greatly the Advantage over *natural Religion*, because its Sanctions are stronger and more clearly revealed.

And first, they are useful in securing the Observance of Virtue, as they will influence the *Illiterate*, who have neither Leisure nor Capacity to examine and discover its Excellency; and awaken the *Inconsiderate* into a proper Attention to it.

A noble Writer, to serve *his* Hypothesis, ran into an Extreme directly opposite to That of *Mandeville* and *Hobbes*.. The latter represented human Nature as all over *devilish*, the former supposes all Men to be *Philosophers* in Understanding, and *Angels* in their Dispositions. Let the Charms of Virtue be ever so engaging, and the Deformity of Vice ever so forbidding, they would not affect the *Bulk* of Mankind. *Some*, I may say, the *Gross* of the World are *incapable* of examining the Relation and Fitness of Things; others are too much involved in Business, or too much immersed in sensual Pleasure, to have either Leisure or Inclination for such intellectual Employments. But *do This and thou shalt live*; or *do This and thou shalt die*; This is a Motive adapted to the Capacities, and suited to the Condition of all Mankind. The Promise of eternal Happiness, and the Denunciation of Eternal Misery, These are
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Considerations more awakening than the clearest abstracted *Reasonings* upon Virtue, and will be much quicker in their Influence.

If these Men were to carry their Argument into *Civil Life*, and reason after the same manner against annexing *positive Sanctions* to the *Laws of the Land*, I fancy, the Legislature would give Them a short and convincing Answer by putting those Sanctions in Execution. I am very much mistaken if the Dread of a Pillory, the Gallows, or an heavy Fine would not affect the common People more than the most elaborate Philosophical Dissertation about the Nature of Society, and the Wisdom of our Laws. What would these *Moralists* think of any Prince, or State, who, instead of threatening and punishing Rebellion with Death, instead of commissioning Persons, attended with proper Ensigns of Authority, to try Offenders, and execute the Sanctions of the Laws upon Them when found guilty; should only send some *Philosophers* about the Country to set forth the natural Turpitude of the Crime, and expatiate upon the Pleasure of sacrificing our own Inclinations to the Good of others? And yet, *positive Sanctions*, whether annexed to *Religious*, or *Civil*, Laws, must be either equally useful, or equally unnecessary.

As to their Assertion, that Virtue *cannot* be enforced by *positive Sanctions*, they not only contradict the common Sense and Practice and Experience of Mankind in the Government of the World, but the known Constitution of human Nature. For, what is it that actuates human Nature but the Desire of *Happiness*, and Aversion to *Misery*? If then a Man be fully convinced that Virtue shall be *rewarded* in the next Life, and Vice *punished*;

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punished; the one with *Eternal Woe*, the other with *Eternal Pleasures*; Is not This Consideration a *rational Spring* of Action? Can any thing more forceably affect a thinking Mind than the Apprehension of *Eternal Happiness*, or *Misery*? No *present*, *temporary* Pleasure, or Pain, can be equal to the *lowest Degree* of *Eternal Happiness*, or *Misery*. The single Point of its *Duration*, the Consideration of *Eternity*, weighs down all others, and is the best Security to Virtue.

If it be farther objected, that the Sanctions of Religion are not only *unnecessary* and *useless*, but *prejudicial*; (and even This they are hardy enough to assert) as drawing off the Attention of the Mind from the Consideration of the natural Excellency and Beauty of Virtue; I answer, that *were* it indeed so that we could *not* attend both to the *Nature* of Virtue, and its Sanctions too, we ought to attend to the *strongest* Motive; and the Consideration of *Eternal Happiness* or *Misery*, being, as I have shewn, more forceable in its self, and much more likely to influence Mankind, than any other whatsoever, the Consequence would be, that we ought to attend solely to *That*.

But, where is the Inconsistency of These two Motives, that they cannot draw together? Surely a Man may see and admire the *Reasonableness* of Religion, and yet bear in Mind the Consideration of *future Consequences*. If he cannot actually think of them both at the same Moment of Time, he may do it at different Times, and give each of them in its Turn its proper Weight and Influence, without the least Prejudice to either; as a Subject of this Nation may possess himself with a true Sense of the Goodness of any of our Laws, and yet have a due Regard to the Punishment threatened

tened to the Breach of it. Accordingly the Christian Religion *requires* us, under the Penalty annexed to its Precepts, to consider and admire their natural Excellency, and to practise them for their *own Sakes*, that is, for the beneficial Effects of them in *This Life*, as well as out of Regard to *future Happiness*; *Whatsoever Things are lovely and of good Report, to think on these Things.*

The noble Writer, abovementioned, in his *Inquiry concerning Virtue*, is forced expressly to give up the Point which it is the manifest Drift of his Essay to establish. He confesses, that *Sanctions* may be in themselves a proper *Motive* of Action, and the Means of awakening our Attention to consider the Excellency of Virtue. He says, "That the Principle of Fear of future Punishment, and Hope of future Rewards, how mercenary and servile soever it may be accounted, is yet in many Circumstances a *great Advantage*, Security and Support to Virtue*." Again, "A Belief of this kind must be supposed to tend *considerably* towards the Calming of the Mind, and disposing or fitting the Person to a better Recollection of himself, and to a stricter Observance of that good and virtuous Principle which needs only his Attention to engage him wholly in its Party and Interest†." He is mistaken in this last Observation; *viz. That Virtue needs only our Attention to engage us wholly in its Party and Interest*; however, he acknowledges the *Expediency* of Sanctions, in order to make Men *attentive* to Virtue; and, in Consequence of This Concession, he owns, also, the *Necessity* of

* Lord Shaftsbury's Characteristicks, Vol. II. p. 60.

† Vol. II. p. 61.

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them, because *without* them Mankind would *not* be sufficiently attentive.

And if *Sanctions* be Thus necessary to the Support of Virtue, how much are we beholden to *Christianity* for revealing to us, with so much greater Certainty, a State of future Rewards and Punishment, much greater and more lasting, than was knowable before? And what Enemies are they to Virtue and to Mankind who take so much Pains to destroy the Belief of Those necessary Truths, or to lessen the Force of them? The *Infidels* are determined not to believe any other Life after This, that they may live as they please here; and, as to the Consequences of *Infidelity* upon *Society*, they think them less Evils than the continual Apprehensions of more lasting Misery after Death. Some *Believers*, out of a professed Regard to the Honour of God and the Interest of *Christianity*, deny the *Eternity* of its Sanctions, as being, in their Opinion, inconsistent with the Divine Attributes. But they ought to have the clearest and most obvious Reasons for such an Opinion before they venture to publish it, since the *Eternity* of a future State is so strongly expressed in the New Testament that we cannot deny it without destroying the *Certainty* of any future State and the Truth of Christianity. And after all what is there in the common Objection against *Eternal* Punishment that does not hold in some Degree or other against *every sort* of Punishment? There ought, it seems, in Equity, to be a *Proportion* between the Crime and the Punishment; whereas in This Case the Crime itself is *Temporal*, and the Punishment *Eternal*, contrary to such supposed *Proportion*. The *Design* of Punishment is to secure *Obedience* to the *Law*, and therefore the *Degree* of *Punishment* ought, in Wisdom,

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dom, to be proportioned, not so much to the *Nature* of the *Crime*, as to the *End* of *punishing*; and *That* being the *Inforcement* of the *Law*, if God has a Power of imposing Laws upon us, he must have a Right of annexing such a Sanction as his Wisdom thinks to be a necessary Security to the Observance of them; for, otherwise, we suppose God to be the Governor of the World, without allowing him the necessary Means of answering the *Ends* of Government. A Power to give a Law, without a Power of *inforcing* it, is no Power at all. Our being *Rational* and *Free Agents* makes us *accountable* Creatures, capable of a Law, and liable to Punishment. Whatever makes us capable of the former, makes us liable to the latter. If we have Understanding to *know*, and Power to *obey* the Law, we have it in our Power to *avoid* the *Punishment*. The *Duration* of the Punishment makes no Alteration as to the *Justice* of it. God has a Right to punish, and to judge what *Degree* of Punishment is necessary to the *Ends* of it. He has threatened *Eternal* Punishment to Disobedience; he has sufficiently made known the Sanction; we have sufficient Power to *escape* the *Punishment*; and while we have the Means of *Eternal Happiness* in our Power, what Right have we to complain, if God makes us liable, through our *own Fault*, to *Eternal Misery*? What Reason have we not thankfully to acknowledge the Bounty of God in annexing such glorious Rewards to our imperfect Obedience?

Some *Christians* have been of Opinion, that, though *Eternal Punishment* be *threatened*, yet God is not obliged to *execute* his Threatnings. But, *God is not a Man that he should lie, or the Son of Man that he should repent. Hath he spoken, and*

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shall he not do it? When God threaten'd, did he intend to execute? If you say he did not, you blasphemously accuse him of gross *Flasbood*. If he *did* intend it, *he is the same Yesterday, To-day, To-morrow, and for ever*; and by the *Immutability* of his Nature, he must *always* intend whatever he *once* intended. *Man* changes his Purposes by reason of the Imperfection of his *Knowledge*, but, Omniscience being infallible, its Determinations must be unalterable.

2. As the *Veracity* of God is one of the Moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, he is under as strong a Moral Necessity of acting agreeably to that Attribute as to any other. God's Moral Attributes are the Foundation of all our Reasonings in Matters of Religion. If we cannot depend upon our Arguments drawn from *Them*, there is no Room for the Belief of any Religious Truths. If we cannot argue from his *Veracity*, we cannot argue with any Certainty from his *Justice*, or any other Attribute; and so there is an End of all Religion at once.

3. Besides, this Notion impeaches his *Wisdom* in Threatning, as well as his *Veracity* in not executing, because it must frustrate the very *Intention* of his Threatnings. For, if no Attribute *obliges* God to inflict the Punishment which he has denounced, Men will naturally and reasonably infer, that his *Goodness* and *Mercy* will induce him to remit it: Or, if he be at Liberty, notwithstanding this Menace, to remit *any part* of it, he is also at Liberty (as to any Force in the Menace itself) to remit the *whole*; and if he be *at Liberty* to do it, we shall conclude, upon good Grounds, that he *will* do it; and then God's Menaces will be insignificant. But tho' *Heaven and Earth may pass away*,
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not one Fot, or one Tittle of what God, the God of Truth, has declar'd, shall fail. And, therefore, my Brethren, since the Word of God standeth sure, let us steadily believe, and frequently consider, what is thus firmly established. Let these Terrors of the Lord persuade us to endure any *temporal* Evils in the Discharge of a good Conscience, rather than run the least Hazard of bringing upon ourselves the infinitely greater Evil of *Eternal Punishment* in the next Life.

When we are *ridiculed* by haughty Scorners let us remember, that if we be ashamed of *Christ* and his Religion, the Son of Man at his second Coming to judge the World will be ashamed of us. Do we meet with *Reproaches* and *Revilings*? What are These to the *Reproaches* of our own Minds, made fully sensible, as they then will be, of our Guilt and Folly? That Worm which dieth not, and that Fire which shall never be quenched! Are we afraid of the *Anger* of Men? Let us immediately recollect how much more dreadful it is to fall into the Hands of the living and incensed God: •Yea, I say unto you, fear him who can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell.

At other Times, as an Encouragement to practise the most disagreeable and difficult Duties, as an Antidote to the Poison of worldly Interest and sensual Pleasures, let us have in our Thoughts the Recompence of our *Christian* Reward. This will quicken and animate our Obedience. This will sweeten all our Labours in God's Service, and make our very Work a Part of our Reward. This will enable us to overcome the World by a *Religious* and *Rational* Contempt of it. This will arm us against all its Temptations, of what Kind, or Degree, soever. For, he that continually bears

in Mind the transcendent Excellency of the Heavenly Bliss, That Eternal Weight of Glory, how can he ever be persuaded to lose those glorious, those ravishing Hopes, for the sake of acquiring an empty Title, of scraping together a little Dirt, or gratifying a short-liv'd Lust? Finally, This will make the Burthen of the Sorrows attending us in this Vale of Tears, light and easy; and be our only Support and Comfort when all other Comforts must fail us, at the Hour of Death; turn the *atra Dies*, the Day so black and shocking to Nature, into the most joyful Expectation of never-ending Happiness.

And now, may God's good Grace give Success to what I have deliver'd; imprint it so strongly and affectionately upon our Hearts, that it may bring forth in us the Fruits of good Living, and be the happy Means of securing the Salvation of our Souls. *Amen.*

To God, &c.

To RICHARD HOOKER, Esq;

S I R,

WHEN three Deities, as the Fable runs, contended for the Preeminence of Skill in useful Productions, *Neptune* formed a Bull, *Minerva* raised a House, and *Vulcan* composed a Man. *Momus*, who was constituted Judge of the Controversy, found particular Fault with the Architect of the human Frame, because he had not made a Door in the Breast of his Creature, in order to discover the Motives of his Actions. The Censure well became the Son of Sleep and Night. But any one, less quick-sighted than *Lynceus*, however he may be puzzled in his Judgment of the Individuals, may discern the universal Principle, which actuates the Species, and is productive of all the Good and Evil in the World, without ocular Inspection into the Breasts of Men. There is a wonderful Simplicity observable in all the Works of Nature, while those of Art are encumber'd and perplex'd, fitted only to one Occasion, and every new Want calls for a new Invention. Thus it is in the material World, all whose Movements and Appearances, as the best Philosophy has demonstrated, hang on one single Spring of universal Gravitation: Hence hard and soft, solid and fluid, Motion, Situation, Complexion, and all the Actions and Qualities of Bodies. Thus it not only is in the material, but in the moral World also, where from the universal Principle of Self-love, coæval and congeneal with all rational Beings, springs that Desire of excelling and rising to higher Degrees of Happiness and Glory, which is the chief, if not the only Source of all human Actions,

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of what Sort, Denomination, or Complexion soever. It may be difficult to unmask all the Disguises of our Nature, pursue her thro' all her Windings and Retirements, and unravel the Perplexities of human Affairs; but so many of our Actions are fairly resolvable into this one Principle, that it may justly be presumed to be the Cause of all the rest, tho' not so obvious to Enquiry: This Principle, of itself indifferent to Good or Evil, Virtue or Vice, has as many different Figures, Shapes and Exertions, as are the Modifications of Body; but, like the Cause of These, is still one and the same. As Excellence is placed in this or that Thing, the Objects of Desire change and shift, and the Means of Attainment do so too. Hence the various, the contradictory Pursuits of Men; but to excel one Way or other is the End of all. In a *perfect* Nature the greatest Good would fire this Passion of the Soul, and the Ambition would be an ardent Desire of being with, and like the supreme Being; and in consequence of This, Religion and all the Virtues of a holy Life (the only Means of Approximation to God) would be the Pursuit: But in a vitiated Constitution of Things the Understanding often does not discern the distant, tho' it be the only true Good; the Will rushes upon a nearer, tho' fanciful Enjoyment, and pushes the Man to seek for the Satisfaction of excellling in some imaginary and chimerical, instead of real and substantial Particular; as in the Applause of Men, instead of the Favour of God. Hence his Actions are sometimes good, at others bad; often benefit Mankind, as often hurt them; but whether he goes thro' the Dangers of War, or drudges thro' the Fatigues of Business; whether he fights in Defence of his Country, or lays it waste;

waste ; builds its Temples, or burns them ; writes for Religion, or against it ; drinks or starves ; dwells in a Palace or a Cell ; hugs his Bags tenaciously, or squanders them profusely ; whatsoever he does, it is in Compliance with this Propension, and natural Bias of his Mind, it is to be illustrious and distinguish'd above others.

The Account here given of all This, is not only easily fetched from the Nature of Things, and warranted by Experience, but is also perfectly agreeable to the Scripture History of the Creation of all rational Beings, and of Mankind in particular. The most glorious perhaps of created Existences had a like Disposition to That which is so universal in Men, but by too fondly contemplating his own Excellencies, directed it wrong, and so fell from his Duty, and became a Devil. From henceforward, that noble Desire of excelling, which had carry'd him to the Heights of Heaven, degenerated into Pride, Malice, and Revenge. When he could not rise to Glory himself, he found a natural Pleasure in plunging others into Misery ; it soothed his Ambition to sink human Nature to the Level of his own, and stand triumphant on the Ruins of a beautiful World. Accordingly the first Temptation was adapted to the Nature of rational Beings, That of the Tempter, and That of the Tempted ; and the Desire of excelling and becoming as Gods, was That which lost the first Pair their Integrity and Happiness. These conveyed their Nature, with its Corruption and Blindness, to their Posterity, who still feel the same Impulse to excel, without Light enough always to distinguish real from fanciful Good. Hence, tho' they run different Ways, and seem to aim at different Marks, they all follow the same Thing, or
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the Phantom of it; and the Ambition of being distinguished actuates Life, and keeps it from Stagnation; and is the Master Spring of all that has been done, or is doing in the World. The Business of Religion is to direct this governing Inclination to right Objects, to introduce a Contempt of temporal Things, and fix the Regard to Those which are eternal; and as the Depravation of Mankind began from a wrong Ambition, the Reformation of them must begin from Humility and Neglect of human Applause, which accordingly the Saviour of the World has made the Gate of Entrance into his Profession, a Gate so narrow, that it is no Wonder, in a World like ours blown about with every Breath, so few enter into it.

Whenever therefore I view the plodding Statesman, the Hero in Armour, the Miser, the Rake, the Wit, the Philosopher, him that jumps over five-barred Gates, and drinks off Pint Glasses, I divert myself with looking on them in the same merry Light with those that fly down from a Steeple, dance on a Rope, whistle, sing, walk, run, hop, jump, or tumble into Fame. But when I cast my Eyes on the gilded Equipage, the Coronet, the Ribbon, the Toilet, the Beau, the Coquet, the Prude, with all the other Characters which constitute and embellish the gayer Scenes of Life, catching the Eyes, and in a thousand Shapes and Colours all courting Admiration, I am apt to suppose, I see a Bed of Tulips of many Stains and Hues, all diversify'd from Those of the preceding Year; the Produce is diversely striped, but the Roots are the same. But the most provoking and ridiculous Character of this sort; is the modern Infidel Bravo, who dares God and Man, risks his own Happiness and that of other People, for the
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sole Pleasure of being distinguished on account of the Oddness of his Conceits, and the Boldness of his Impieties. He is baffled, confuted: What makes him blunder on, and write again? The same Cause which made him blaspheme at first, the Desire of Distinction and Applause.

And yet what a Phantom, what a mere Bubble of Air is this Idol of Mankind, Reputation, and Glory? How difficult is it to attain, how easy to lose, how much a nothing if got and preserved? In a crowding elbowing World it is not easy to put in your Pretensions, much less to have them regarded: Others bar you; your own Actions prevent you; the Living, the Dead dispute the Prize with you. You have outgone many; 'tis nothing till you have outstretched the foremost, you run still only the hinder Wheel, run as fast as you will. But put the Case that you get first, your Crown is a Wreath of Leaves, your Reward a little Breath; what you seek is a Shadow, which eludes your Grasp; you cannot enjoy it while you live, you are insensible of it when dead; if you do good Actions to gain it, you lose the Reward of them; if bad ones, you double their Punishment.

But some one will say, nay perhaps all the Characters that I have mentioned will in a Body ask, What does this Censor mean, this supernumerary Sage? Upon what Principle does he himself pen this tedious Harangue upon the Vanity of human Pursuits? The Answer is obvious; Perhaps to give the World their Revenge, and add a new Instance of the Folly of Men; or possibly out of Complaisance to the Fashion of the Times, and the Customs of his Country. I shall explain myself by a Story. News being brought of the Approach of *Philip of Macedon* with an Army towards the City of *Corinth*, the Inhabitants were thrown into
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great Consternation; they run to their Arms, and every Hand was employed in repairing the Walls and Fortifications, and carrying Materials for Defence. *Diogenes* the Cynick seeing this busy Scene of Things, and himself unengaged, took his Tub, which was his Dwelling, and with great Industry rolled it up and down the *Cranæum*, the usual Place of his Residence before the City, and being asked the Reason of his whimsical Labour, answered, He did it, that he might not be the only idle Person among so many that were in Action.

To fill up this Epistle, and add a Force beyond that of naked, dry Dissertation, I should be glad of a Portrait of human Life, like that in the Table of *Cebes*, if an *Apelles*, a *Raphael*, or a *Titian*, would come to my Aid, and give Life and seeming Motion to the Figures of my Design, which I only pretend to sketch out. On the head of an elevated Hill, mixing with the Clouds, in a gilded Palace, crowned with Peacocks Feathers, should Fame be seated on a Throne of Ivory. Among the Decorations should be Columns and Obelisks, triumphal Arches, Wreaths and Crowns, Arms and Books. The thinnest Æther should be diffused round the Deity of the Place, whitening into a Glory as it approached near her Person. Shrill Trumpets should gladden the Place, and awaken the various Inhabitants of the World to enter upon Action, and ascend the Hill thro' Roads cut every Way up its Sides, and as many as were the Inclinations of the Adventurers, some more difficult of Ascent than others, but all so steep, and broken, and slippery, as threatened Danger of falling from Top to Bottom upon the least false Step. Along one of the craggy Paths might be represented the Glitter of Helmets and the Clashing
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of Swords, and Groups of Figures fighting their Way upward with incredible Pains, and wading thro' a River of Blood, to seize the Goddess as it were by Force, thick at the Beginning of the Road, but growing gradually thinner as they came nearer the End of it. An *Alexander*, or a *Charles* the Twelfth, might be seen near the Summit. In another Tract might be expressed Men loaded with Bags, and dragging up themselves and Luggage with much Difficulty, as if they designed to bribe the Duty above them, but so retarded with making up a just Number before they began the Journey, or in mending those which burst in the Way, that few should be seen above half Way the Steep of the Hill. In another Part might be exhibited a Sett of grave Fellows, pulling one another up by their Beards reaching down to their Girdles; among these one laughing all the Way, and the other crying, and a third weary of the Length of the Way, jumping into a Fire, in order to get rid of the Incumbrance of his Body, and arrive the sooner at the delightful Mansion. By way of Contrast to these might be shewn, Persons in Machines tempting the Steep with the finest Barbes: And near them a beautiful Set of Females, fanning and crowding all the Sail they cou'd of Ribbons and Silks, in order to be wafted up by the Air they gather'd in their Cloaths, and by the Flutter of their Motion. Inspired by These, might appear near them a gay Troop, self crown'd with Bays, walking to the Measure of their own Verses; some faster, some slower, invoking, but in vain, the Nine Muses to help them up. An Herald, in all his Variety of colour'd Dress, might lead up another Company habited like himself, and so attentively looking on long Parchments delineated
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in form of a Tree, as to seem to make very little Progress upwards themselves. In a distant, neglected Path, if the Painter pleases, may be seen the Writer of this Paper, shoving up the empty Tub of *Diogenes* before mention'd, affording and receiving Plenty of Diversion. A smiling Figure call'd *Hope*, may be placed bending forward from the Brow of the Hill, looking every Way, and encouraging and inviting the Travellers. Those that are within her Reach may by her be deliver'd to another smiling Female, call'd *Deceit*; who, leading them insensibly behind the Throne, may consign them over to a bony Personage, call'd *Labour*, and he, after some Discipline, may resign them to *Old Age* with a pucker'd Face: At that Instant *Repentance*, all over Tears, might meet them, and *Vexation* writhing herself every way: Last of all *Contumely* might be made to seize them, and throw them down the back*Part of the Hill into Darkness and Oblivion. The Proprietor of the Tub, who came for Curiosity, rather than any Desire or Expectation of Fame, and who ventured nothing but his wooden Vessel in this Expedition, having got up so far as to behold all these cruel Scenes of Disappointment, wou'd only beg the Favour to be shewn in this Piece rolling himself down again, contented and delighted with his Escape, and humble, but safe Situation at the Bottom of the Hill.

Yours, &c.

WITH your Leave, Mr. *Hooker*, I am going to renew an old Correspondence with you. The Reasons of my dropping it can be of no Use, but the Occasion of my taking it up again may be a proper Introduction to my Letter. I have lately lost a particular Friend; and, as it is usual with me in such Cases, instead of diverting my Mind by Company and Amusements, to which others generally have recourse for Relief, I retired from the Noise and Hurry of Business, from the Pleasures and Entertainments of the World, that I might, without Interruption, and to better Advantage, indulge such Sentiments and Reflections as were suitable to my Concern. It is the Business of *Religion* and *Philosophy* to teach us the *proper Use* of *Afflictions*; it is our Wisdom, therefore, to *consider* and *apply* them to the Regulation of our Judgments and the Improvement of our Dispositions, but it is generally the great Care of Mankind to *forget* them as soon as possible. It is the Intention of *Providence* that they should make us *better Christians*, and *wiser Men*; by their means to make the Thoughtless more serious; to humble our Pride, and correct our Vanity; to shew the Emptiness and Uncertainty of earthly Happiness; to check the too eager Pursuits and immoderate Anxieties of the Worldling; to raise our Thoughts to the Expectation of more fixed and permanent Enjoyments; to dilate and open the Heart contracted by Selfishness; to still the Tempests of Anger, and appease the Fury of Resentment; to smooth the rough Dispositions into Complaisance, and soften the Inhuman into Compassion. But how can they ever produce any of these Effects if, as soon as any Misfortune happen to us, we immediately drown
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the Remembrances of it in Liquor, or stifle it in Impertinence? We must give it Time to make its proper Impression, and ourselves the Leisure to make proper Reflections. Our Closet is a fitter Place for us, at such a Time, than a Crowd; and our own Mind the most useful, though not, perhaps, the most agreeable, Companion. When our Grief, either through the Suddenness or Greatness of the Calamity, through any natural or accidental Weakness of the Patient, is likely to overwhelm us, it may be right to divert our Thoughts from the affecting Subject 'till we can think of it with more Temper; but unless we do think of it we can never make the true Use of it. While we are giving Assistance to the Imperfections of our *Constitution* we must take care not to defeat the Designs of God and *Nature*. Immoderate Grief will destroy the Health of the Body and hinder the Exercise of the Faculties of the Mind, but Grief, rightly grounded, and duly tempered, is highly useful, if not absolutely necessary, to true Wisdom and religious Perfection; and where one suffers by too much Indulgence, Thousands lose the Benefit of it by endeavouring to remove it too soon, and by improper Methods. The Loss of our *Relations* and *Friends* naturally produces the same Effects which are common to *Afflictions* in general, but, like all other Calamities, it has something *peculiar to itself*. The tender and generous Concern which an *honest* Mind feels whilst it grieves for a departed Friend has a particular Force in it to assuage the tumultuous Passions; to *humanize* and *civilize* the Soul; to beget *Meekness*, *Gentleness*, and *Kindness*; *Simplicity* and *Sincerity*. IRACUNDUS had one of the most boisterous Tempers, but it happened that he lost his only Child, the De-

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kind; and if he could longer have indulged this generous and soft Disposition of Mind, it might have produced quite other Sentiments and Maxims than those by which he had governed himself, and created Affections to which his Heart had been an utter Stranger; but the Variety of his worldly Projects too soon called him from his Retirement, drew off his Attention, and re-engaged all his Care. His Soul gradually *contracted* again, till it was *shut up* as close as before. In short, AVARUS is become AVARUS again.

While I am recollecting some of the virtuous Fruits of this kind of Sorrow, and observing the good Effects of it upon my own Mind, I cannot help thinking of many *dry, cold* Creatures, who mistake *Inhumanity* for *Manhood*, and value themselves upon the *Imperfections* of their Natures. SICCUS has buried above twenty *Relations*, and as many, what he calls, *Friends*; that is, Persons with whom he used to have frequent Dealings or Conversation; he attended the mournful Solemnity of their Funeral, and sometimes was present at the more affecting Scene of their last Moments; but neither the Looks nor Words of the *Dying*, nor the Coffins of the *Dead*; neither the Sight of the *Grave*, which waits for us all, nor the Service of the Church which suggests Sentiments suitable to the Occasion; not all This can Affect SICCUS. He thinks it his *Glory* to be *insensible*, and would be *ashamed* to shed a *Tear* for the nearest Relation, or the most valuable and agreeable Acquaintance. But let SICCUS know that his *Insensibility* and *Want of Thought*, on Occasions that demand *Reflection* and *Sorrow* from us, betray a very bad Head, or a very bad Heart. A Man that does not *think*, or that does not think in a manner suitable to such a Subject,

Subject, is defective in his *Understanding*. A man that wants *Tenderness* is defective in his *Constitution*; and generally wants *Honesty* as well as *Generosity*. The *noblest* Natures are always the *softest*. The greatest *Heroes* whom all the Terrors of Battle could never intimidate, have been the soonest melted into Compassion for the Afflicted, or into Sorrow for the Loss of those whom they lov'd. Not to ransack the Annals of *Greece* or *Rome* for Instances of this kind, our own Nation can supply us with flagrant ones. King *Charles the First* was a Proof that *true Magnanimity*, *true Greatness of Mind* and *Tenderness of Heart*, are inseparable. The Sight of *Danger* could not move him, but *Compassion* for his unhappy, though rebellious Subjects, could easily, I had almost said, *too easily*, move him. When he view'd the *Scaffold* and the *Axe* he neither trembled nor wept, but when he heard of the Death of his beloved Friend the Duke of *Buckingham*, Rivers of Tears ran down his Cheeks, and his Soul was in the deepest Distress. An Argument, This, of the *Integrity* and *Good Nature* of the Prince, however some may think him mistaken in his Opinion of his Servant. Another of our Kings, remarkable for his Courage in the Field, is as eminent a *living* Instance of the tenderest Grief for the Death of his Faithful, his Affectionate, his Bosom Friend. But a much greater than either of them has *dignified* Sorrow, and convinced us that it is not below *Humanity*, even when joined to *Divinity*, to *weep* for the Loss of a *dead Friend*. The BLESSED *JESUS*, the SAVIOUR of the World, wept for *Lazarus*. He *wept*; and yet his Passions were all as regular, as his Judgment was unerring. Accordingly, the Disciples, when they saw his *Tears*, only said, *see how he lov'd*

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lov'd him! They did not think them any Argument of Weakness, but of a *becoming Affection*. *Shakespear*, as I remember, has observed of one who took no Delight in *good Music*, that he would never *trust* him; concluding, that there must be something very wrong in his *Nature*, or *Harmony* would have affected him. I own, I should be as cautious how I trusted *Siccus*, or any of his Constitution. It is as unnatural to the human Soul *not* to be tenderly affected by the Death of a *near Relation*, or of a *faithful and dear Friend*, as it is to be *unaffected* with *Harmony* or *Symmetry*. I can hardly think such a Soul capable of being *thoroughly honest*; I am certain, it is incapable of duly discharging the soft and sweet Offices of *Friendship* or *Charity*. TENDERNESS I apprehend to be so *essential* an Ingredient in the *human Nature*, that whoever wants it wants *Humanity*. He wants the *Nature* of a *Man*; and is much more unfit to perform the *Offices* of a *Man* in *Society* than if he wanted only a *Leg*, or an *Arm*. Were we *pure Spirit*, like the *Deity*, as we should be *impassible* like him, so we might act properly in our Station by the Direction of our *Understanding*; but *Creatures* so liable, as we are, to *Ignorance*, to *Error*, and *Inattention*, must have something to supply the *Defects* and *Absence* of *Reason*. And, if we consider what a Variety of other Passions we carry about us which center only in *ourselves*, we should be very *unsociable* *Creatures* without some *counter* *Passion*, that prompts as strongly to seek the *Happiness* of *others*. This Passion, Mr *Hooker*, is *Humanity*, or *Tenderness* of *Nature*, without which no one, let his Professions be what they will, can be as heartily, as I am,

24 OC 62 Your Affectionate Friend.

